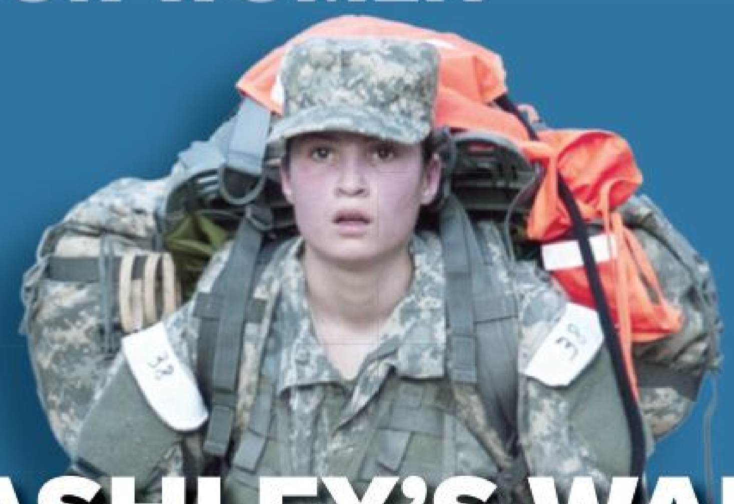
RETHINKING THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING ★ NEW GROOMING RULES FOR WOMEN

AirForceTimes

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ASHLEY'S WAR

SPEC OPS WOMEN COMING TO BIG SCREEN





EXTREMISM IN THE RANKS

WHY DoD'S LOOMING CRACKDOWN WON'T BE EASY

AFTER THE ISIS AIR WAR

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 5-YEAR FIGHT

NEW OPTIONS TO GET OUT EARLY OR GO RESERVE

MECHANICAL PROBLEMS CAUSED FATAL E-11 CRASH

FEBRUARY 2021
VOL. NO. 82 ISSUE NO. 2
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Cover photo:
Win McNamee/Getty Images
Cover Design:
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Air Force Times (ISSN 0002-2403) | Vol. 82, Issue 02 | Air Force Times is published 12 times a year by Sightline Media Group, 901 N Glebe Rd. 5th Floor Arlington, VA 22203. Schedule is subject to change. Annual subscription rate is $55 U.S. domestic mail. To subscribe or change an address, email Air Force Times, Cust-svc@airforcetimes.com. Periodical postage paid at Vienna, Va., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 707.4.12.5). Non-postal and military facilities: Send address corrections to Air Force Times, Circulation, 901 N Glebe Rd. 5th Floor Arlington, VA 22203. ©2021 Sightline Media Group **Photocopies:** To request photocopies, order online from the Copyright Clearance Center at www.copyright.com, specifying ISSN 0002-2403. The fee is $3.50 per photocopy per article, limited to 500 copies. **Reprints & Permissions:** To reprint or license content including text, images, graphics and logos please contact PARS International by phone: 212-221-9595. **Advertising standards:** Advertising is accepted on the premise that the merchandise and services are accurately described. Ads that contain fraudulent, deceptive, or misleading statements or illustrations, or in the opinion of Air Force Times may be offensive, are not knowingly accepted. If you encounter noncompliance, please tell us. **Advertising sales office:** 901 N Glebe Rd. 5th Floor Arlington, VA 22203. **For Advertising Inquiries, Email:** advertisingsales@sightlinemg.com. **Customer Service:** (800) 408-0030, Email cust-svc@airforcetimes.com, or write to Air Force Times, Subscriber Service, 901 N Glebe Rd. 5th Floor Arlington, VA 22203. For change of address, attach address label from a recent issue.

ON THE RADAR



NEW CAREER FIELD LETS OFFICERS FOCUS ON OVERSEAS JOBS

The Air Force has created a new career field specifically for foreign area officers, who often work in embassies overseas and as attaches to foster cooperation with other nations' militaries.

Col. Lawrence Pravecek, the chief of the Air Force's international airmen division, said the new 16F Air Force specialty code will help foreign area officers concentrate on those jobs, advance in their careers, and show the service's commitment to international cooperation.

The more than 700 airmen currently serving as foreign area officers have from now until Feb. 8 to apply to transfer to the new 16F career field. It will be a voluntary move, Pravecek said. Officers who want to stay in their original career fields will not be forced to switch.

Foreign area officers work in U.S. embassies around the world, usually in defense attache offices or security cooperation offices, or in staff jobs at geographic combatant commands.

Since the FAO program was created in 2008, the Air Force has filled those roles with skilled officers who alternate between their core specialty, and their foreign area officer specialty. Such officers are chosen to become FAOs after about seven to 10 years in uniform.



AIR FORCE WILL TRACK DISCIPLINE DATA TO ENSURE FAIRNESS

Air Force commanders are now required to track demographic data from lesser disciplinary actions to make sure they are being carried out fairly and impartially.

These disciplinary actions include administrative counseling, admonishments and reprimands. The Air Force plans to track rank, age, gender, race and ethnicity, of both airmen and Space Force guardians who are being punished, and those who issue the disciplinary actions.

The requirement was laid out in a Dec. 21 memo.

Tracking this data "reinforces the department's commitment to ensuring all airmen and guardians are treated fairly and provides commanders insight to facilitate positive practices, such as increased mentoring and professional development," John Fedrigo, the Air Force's principal deputy assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said in the memo.

The Air Force began collecting data on nonjudicial punishments and courts-martial in 1974, and the new memo expands that data collection.

From now on, when airmen or guardians are to receive a letter of counseling, admonishment or reprimand that will be placed in their official record, including a personal information file or unfavorable information file, the demographic data will be tracked.

But names and other personally identifiable information will not be collected. Commanders will report the data to staff judge advocates at installations, who will make that demographic data available to commanders during briefings on discipline, or at other times.

AIR FORCE ORDERS UNITS TO TOSS OFFENSIVE MORALE PATCHES, MOTTOS

The Air Force is conducting a sweep of its emblems, morale patches, nicknames, and other symbols to weed out those that are racist, sexist or otherwise offensive.

Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, and Chief of Space Operations Gen. Jay Raymond signed a memo Dec. 23 ordering the review.

Squadron commanders and higher have 60 days from the issuing of the memo to review official and unofficial unit emblems, morale patches, mottos, nicknames, coins and other forms of unit recognition and identity.

Commanders will be required to remove any visual representation, symbols or language that is derogatory to any race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age or disability, the memo said, "to ensure an inclusive and professional environment."

"It is critical for the Department of the Air Force to embody an environment of dignity, respect and inclusivity for all airmen and [Space Force] guardians," the memo said, according to an excerpt released by the Air Force. "Our core values demand we hold ourselves to high standards and maintain a culture of respect and trust in our chain of command."

Continuing to use offensive symbols or names "ostracizes our teammates, undermining unit cohesion and impeding our mission readiness and success," the memo continued.

The commanders should consult historians, staff judge advocates, and equal opportunity specialists during these reviews.

"This is not a policy change, but a review of good practices for the health of our culture and all our personnel. We must ensure all our airmen and guardians are valued and respected."

Regulations governing organizational lineage, honors and heraldry require emblem designs to "reflect favorably on the United States Air Force, be original, distinctive, dignified, in good taste and non-controversial. Commanders should consider the guidance in Air Force Instruction 84-105, as they conduct the review.

CLOCKWISE: SENIOR AIRMAN CHRISTOPHER QUAIL/AIR FORCE; AIR FORCE

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BOEING'S NEW F-15EX JET MAKES ITS FIRST FLIGHT

Boeing's first F-15EX took to the skies for its inaugural flight Feb. 2, a milestone that will allow the company to deliver the first two planes to the U.S. Air Force by the end of March.

After a couple of hours of delays due to weather — which also held up plans to conduct a first flight on Feb. 1 — Boeing test pilot Matt "Phat" Giese took off from Lambert International Airport in St. Louis at approximately 1:57 p.m. EST. The flight lasted approximately 90 minutes, and the plane performed as expected, Boeing said in a news release.

The Air Force first added the F-15EX to its fiscal 2020 budget at the behest of the Defense Department's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation office, or CAPE. With the Air Force and Air National Guard's fleet of 1970s-era F-15C/D jets showing signs of age, the service needed to either conduct an expensive life extension or buy new planes to replace them.

Once delivered to the Air Force, the first two F-15EXs will go Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, for testing, with the remaining six aircraft set to be delivered to the base in FY23.



HERE IS THE SPACE FORCE'S NEW RANK STRUCTURE

The military's newest service has spelled out what its rank structure will be. But those who advocated for the Space Force to adopt a rank structure patterned after the Navy will be disappointed. With a few exceptions, the Space Force's rank structure mimics the Air Force from which it derived.

The officer rank structure for Space Force guardians, as they are now known, will be the same as that used by the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps, ranging from second lieutenants to four-star generals.

The differences primarily come in the junior enlisted ranks. E-1s through E-4s can be referred to as specialist 1, specialist 2, specialist 3 and specialist 4. Instead of referring to E-5s as staff sergeants, as the Air Force does, the Space Force will address them simply as "sergeant."

The top enlisted advisor will now be Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force Roger Towberman.

HONOR THE FALLEN

2 SOLDIERS DIE IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS IN KUWAIT

Two Army noncommissioned officers, a Texas National Guardsman and an active-duty soldier, died in separate incidents in Kuwait nine days apart.

Staff Sgt. Anthony C. Bermudez, 28, a small-arms and artillery repairer assigned to Area Support Group–Kuwait, was killed at about 8 a.m. Jan. 11 during a routine troop movement near Camp Buehring, according to Army Central Command. Two other soldiers were injured in the accident.



Staff Sgt. Anthony C. Bermudez



Staff Sgt. Timothy Luke Manchester

Originally from Dallas, Bermudez enlisted in the Army in 2011; attended basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., beginning in October 2011; attended advanced individual training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas beginning in January 2012; and arrived in Kuwait in June 2020. This was his first overseas tour.

His awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal (with one oak leaf cluster), Army Good Conduct Medal (third award), the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Non- Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (second award), the Parachute Badge and the Expert Qualification Badge for the carbine.

Staff Sgt. Timothy Luke Manchester, 34, a National Guardsman from Austin, Texas, died at Camp Arifjan in a non-combat-related incident that officials say remains under investigation. No details about his cause of death were released.

Manchester was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 36th Infantry Division, Camp Mabry, Texas. He deployed with the 36th ID in September.

After serving in the Marine Corps, Manchester joined the Texas Army National Guard in 2018.

His awards include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

CLOCKWISE: ERIC SHINDELBOWER/BOEING; ALEX BRANDON/AP; TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT; ARMY

DONOR OUTREACH FOR VETERANS, CORPS.

BECOME A KIDNEY DONOR



Jon Wayne Taylor

Frontline Combat Veteran
DOVE's first living kidney donor (Oct. 2020)
@jonwaynetaylor

When Jon first considered living donation, he thought it would be ideal if his kidney could go to a Veteran. He was surprised by the difficulties he encountered and agreed to donate his kidney to anyone, becoming an "advanced donor" through the National Kidney Registry (NKR). As a result of his donation, he received a kidney donor voucher allowing him to select any recipient. Still wanting to see a Veteran benefit from his donation, NKR connected Jon to DOVE, resulting in a Veteran being scheduled for a kidney transplant in Feb. 2021.

His selfless donation resulted in **saving two lives.**

Jon is proud to be a living kidney donor, wants more people to consider donation to Veterans and feels DOVE is an organization that can help make it happen.

> *" It's been an amazing process ... This whole time I've been walking around with a spare kidney for just this occasion, and it feels great to give it to someone who really needs it."*
> -Jon Wayne Taylor



Damon Hewin

US Army Veteran
2003-2014

Damon Hewin is a 46 year-old Veteran and married father of six. Damon enlisted in the Army after 9/11 and was deployed twice.

He now serves as a police officer and was recently awarded a Life Saving Medal.

Damon is diagnosed with end-stage kidney disease.

Damon is one of the nearly 2,000 Veterans awaiting a kidney transplant at a VA or Military Hospital who needs our help to find a living kidney donor.

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DOVE's mission is to Find, Educate, Screen and Support prospective living donors and then match these donors to Veterans awaiting transplant.

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Flare for battle
An Air Force F-15E fires flares as it supports Operation Inherent Resolve in June 2017.

STAFF SGT. TREVOR MCBRIDE/AIR FORCE

AIR WAR AGAINST ISIS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIVE-YEAR FIGHT

By Todd South
tsouth@militarytimes.com

The five-year coalition air campaign to defeat the Islamic State and roll back its territorial gains in Iraq and Syria saw a "complex and contested" airspace, depleted stockpiles of precision-guided munitions and more intense bombing than seen for similar periods in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

That's according to, "The Air War Against the Islamic State," a recently released 511-page report by Rand Corp.

The report's authors detail the 2014 to 2019 timeline of the Operation Inherent Resolve campaign. Their analysis paints a picture of an air war that was critical in the defeat of ISIS, but that differed in many ways from recent counterinsurgency operations, which highlighted key areas that need improvement for future conflicts.

The authors make specific joint and Air Force recommendations that zero in on targeting, assets, battlespace management, personnel needs, weapons use and self-defense rules of engagement.

They argue the joint force should:

- Revise its targeting doctrine based on the experience in OIR, to include potentially incorporating the strike cell or reverting back to using the Joint Air Ground Integration Center.
- Reinvigorate, re-examine, and revise the target-development process to make it more efficient.
- Modify the allocation process for high-demand assets in joint campaigns to reduce inefficiencies and increase agility.
- Reexamine battlespace management and revise doctrine or tactics, techniques, and procedures so that it can more dynamically manage both the close and the deep fights.

Meanwhile, the Air Force must:

- Limit civilian casualties and collateral damage, requiring it to allocate precision-guided munitions efficiently across theaters and identify how to safely use second- and third-choice munitions.
- Develop more targeteers and intelligence professionals to support a reinvigoration of the target-development process.
- Stress self-defense rules of engagement in air-to-air operations to airmen in training and real-world flying events to better prepare airmen for flying missions in contested airspace against near-peer or more-capable adversaries.

When taken as a whole, the campaign against ISIS was massive in its breadth but different from the recent counterinsurgency wars in both conduct and intensity of bombing.

The campaign saw as many as eight to 10 times as many weapons dropped as compared with similar periods in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, according to the report.

As of early 2019, the campaign had "launched 32,678 strikes, affecting approximately 81,000 targets, and dropped more than 117,000 weapons."

By comparison, aircraft in Afghanistan engaged as few as 2,365 targets in 2010 and as many as 5,198 in 2007. An average of 4,200 weapons a year were dropped in Afghanistan.

In Iraq operations in 2007, forces dropped fewer than 2,000 weapons.

During OIR, however, aircraft employed 39,584 weapons in 2017. On average for the whole campaign 26,645 weapons were dropped annually.

Experience in the previous wars didn't necessarily translate to the kind of work needed in the counter-ISIS effort.

"After decades of flying primarily overwatch mission with little but CAS and dynamic targets since September 11, the joint community's ability and capacity to plan and develop a deliberate strike operation in the deep areas atrophied," according to the report.

That atrophy meant "many practitioners lacked experience in applying these processes to real-world operations and the 'muscle memory' to rapidly execute them," according to the report.

That was in the early stages of the conflict, 2014 to early 2015. And a change required a "shift in mindset" on deliberate targeting from time-sensitive on-call support to longer-term perspectives that looked at future collection opportunities, according to the report.

By summer 2015, then-Lt. Gen. Charles Q. Brown, commander U.S. Air Forces Central Command, Air Combat Command, ordered AFCENT to "fix the target development process" because it was "broken."

Brown has since been promoted to general and now serves as the Air Force chief of staff.

Two shortfalls that continued throughout the conflict, authors noted, were the shortage of intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets and depleted inventories of precision-guided munitions.

The ISR shortage led to competition between close and deep fights over the platforms.

Airmen interviewed for the report said that drones prioritized for the close fight "hindered deep-strike operations against ISIS."

That grew from both a focus on the close fight to support ground units but also an inability to forecast requirements and reallocated assets when there was a pause in ground operations.

"It's hard to forecast. I don't think we have the tools, particularly, because of the way the fight was designed. I wouldn't call it a wag, but it was an educated guess," Brown told report authors. "As you go back and look at it, how do you understand what is the right amount if you're doing armed overwatch versus deliberate strike?"

That's an important item to improve, authors wrote, because it weighs on future planned air operations.

A high demand for precision-guided munitions to reduce or avoid civilian casualties resulted in a shortage of the sought-after weapons.

That led authors to report that existing stockpiles are insufficient.

Which means the Air Force, in particular, "will need to buy sufficient quantities of different types of precision-guided munitions for different missions and allocate these efficiently across theaters…"



Assessing leadership
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass speaks at Maxwell Air Force Base in September.

WILLIAM BIRCHFIELD/AIR FORCE

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT STUFF?

AIR FORCE ROLLS OUT NEW LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT TOOL

By Stephen Losey
slosey@airforcetimes.com

The Air Force has announced a new addition to the Airman Comprehensive Assessment feedback tool that seeks to measure the leadership qualities of most officers and senior noncommissioned officers.

The 10 airman leadership qualities focus on airmen's character and competence, and will be part of the feedback tools for second lieutenants through colonels, and master sergeants, senior master sergeants and chief master sergeants, the Air Force said.

The Air Force expects these leadership qualities will lay the foundation for future performance reporting systems for officers and enlisted airmen alike, the service said.

"The adjustments toward these new leadership qualities are imperative to shift the way we measure, incentivize and reward the airmen we need for the future," Chief of Staff Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown said in the news release. "We must have evaluation systems that provide constructive feedback, evaluate against qualities we value, and highlight future potential."

The Air Force rolled out the Airman Comprehensive Assessment in 2014, as part of a broader overhaul of the evaluation process. The assessment's feedback form requires airmen and their supervisors to have detailed conversations each year to make sure airmen's goals and expectations are clear to them. That way, when evaluation time rolls around, airmen should already know whether they met those expectations or not, and their performance evaluation should not be a surprise.

But now, as part of that process, airmen's leadership qualities will also be measured on a five-point scale: Does not meet expectations, developing, proficient, highly proficient, and outstanding.

Airmen will be evaluated on how well they demonstrate their job proficiency, take the initiative, and show they can adapt to changing conditions or emerging obstacles to accomplish their mission, the Air Force said.

They will be measured on how well they foster teamwork and create an inclusive environment, their emotional intelligence, and how clearly and articulately they communicate with others and listen to others.

Airmen will also be evaluated on how responsibly they manage their assigned resources, and take accountability for the actions of themselves and their team.

And the Air Force will measure how well airmen make well-informed, effective and timely decisions, and think creatively and innovatively to solve problems, make improvements and take calculated risks.

These changes have been in the works for the last two years, and are part of larger reforms to the Air Force's talent management system as the service tries to create a more comprehensive evaluation system.

"To improve how we make talent management decisions, we must measure what we value," Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services. "These airmen leadership qualities make clear what we value in officer and enlisted performance."

"Our airmen must understand what they are being graded against to provide them with a clear understanding of expectations and aid them in their future development," Kelly continued. "The objective is for raters to begin discussing and assessing ratees against the airman leadership qualities to provide us feedback as they introduce the new measures they will see in future evaluation systems."

The Air Force will gather feedback from major commands across the service. That will be used to refine the leadership qualities and the addendum before the new evaluation system is finalized.

"We are working to build a system that defines the qualities we value and need in our airmen," Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass said in the release. "I'm very excited that we are doing that in synergy with our officer corps. It shows that we value airmen leadership qualities across the ranks, from E-1 to O-10."

This form will be voluntary at first, the Air Force said, but leaders will be encouraged to use it as much as is practical.

SECAF BARRETT'S LEGACY: STANDING UP SPACE FORCE WITHOUT CONTROVERSY



SECAF Barrett

Former Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett meets airmen during lunch at the 332d Air Expeditionary Wing on Nov. 21, 2019.

SENIOR MASTER SGT. MATTHEW BRANSON/AIR FORCE

By Stephen Losey
slosey@militarytimes.com

With her tenure as Air Force secretary at an end, experts say Barbara Barrett — who kept a lower profile than her predecessors — will be remembered for several important accomplishments, including the quiet, steady stand-up of the Space Force.

In interviews with Air Force Times, Hawk Carlisle, president of the National Defense Industrial Association, and defense policy expert John Venable of the Heritage Foundation said that splitting part of the Air Force into the military's sixth service could have gone awry in many ways.

But, they said, the Department of the Air Force made it happen without significant public ruptures, which they credited to Barrett's behind-the-scenes leadership.

"When you throw a wrench in the works with a significant organizational change like this one, it causes folks to rise up and fight it," Venable, a former Air Force fighter pilot, said in an interview. "You didn't catch wind of that. I never read an article that said, 'The Air Force is tearing itself apart in this birthing process of the Space Force.'"

The Air Force held a socially distanced, Jan. 14 farewell ceremony for Barrett, as well as other top officials such as acquisition chief Will Roper and assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs Shon Manasco, at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington DC.

"We are a better Air Force because of Secretary Barrett's passion, commitment, leadership and heart," Chief of Staff Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown said at the ceremony.

Brown said he saw during their trips how deeply Barrett cared for airmen and their families. He also lauded Barrett for her leadership during the turmoil of 2020, including the coronavirus pandemic and the racial unrest that followed the death of George Floyd.

"When our nation faced the greatest pandemic it's seen in 100 years, the department didn't slow down, it accelerated," Brown said. "When George Floyd was murdered, and our airmen were hurting and wanted a voice, you gave it to them. You led the Department of Defense's work on diversity and inclusion, to ensure meaningful, measurable and sustainable improvements became an enduring part of our military."

In her remarks, Barrett praised the airmen she helped lead, and said she leaves confident the nation is safe because of them.

"There is one eye-watering constant across the Air and Space Forces: the universality that these are good people," she said. "I have worked at numerous businesses, I have been a member of dozens of groups, and I have been part of myriad organizations, but I have never been part of any entity where there is such consistency of good intent and effort to be the best, together."

Barrett, who became the Air Force's 25th secretary in October 2019, left in January, shortly before President Joe Biden's inauguration. Biden has not yet announced his pick for Air Force secretary.

Carlisle and Venable said that Barrett kept a relatively low profile in the Pentagon, but guided several moves that will have long-lasting effects on the Air Force.

When Barrett came in as secretary, Carlisle said, the hunt was already under way for the Air Force's next chief of staff, and Brown, then commander of Pacific Air Forces, was at or near the top of the list. Barrett helped ensure his historic nomination by President Trump and confirmation as the service's 22nd chief of staff, as well as the first-ever Black officer to head any military service, he said.

Barrett's shepherding of Brown, a highly respected officer whose selection was widely praised, through the nomination process and into the Air Force's top uniformed position ensures the service is left with a steady and skilled leader for years to come, Carlisle said.

When the time came to create the Space Force, Carlisle said, one of Barrett's most significant contributions was to ensure it was on an equal footing with the Air Force from which it was created.

By not allowing it to become a junior service within the Department of the Air Force, the Space Force and Chief of Space Operations Gen. Jay Raymond now have an equal voice when it comes to making decisions, Carlisle said. This, he said, gives the Space Force comparable stature to that enjoyed by the Marine Corps within the Department of the Navy.

Creating the Space Force wasn't easy, Carlisle said. Not all of the Air Force was on board with the idea of creating a separate service, he said. But Barrett got it done in exceptionally rapid time, especially when compared to the seven years it took to create U.S. Special Operations Command after the catastrophic 1980 mission to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran.

"She clearly had her finger on the pulse, at all the levels, to make sure there wasn't that undercurrent of disagreement," Carlisle said.

In an administration where senior leaders often ran the risk of provoking the ire of President Trump — sometimes quite publicly — Barrett seems to have always stayed on his good side, Carlisle said. That was no mean feat, particularly since Trump made creating the Space Force one of his signature projects.

Under her watch, the Air Force recently chose the Army's Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, as the new headquarters of U.S. Space Command.

That decision is already proving controversial, though, as lawmakers in Colorado — which also was vying for Space Command's headquarters — are alleging Alabama was chosen for political reasons and calling on the incoming Biden administration to reconsider.

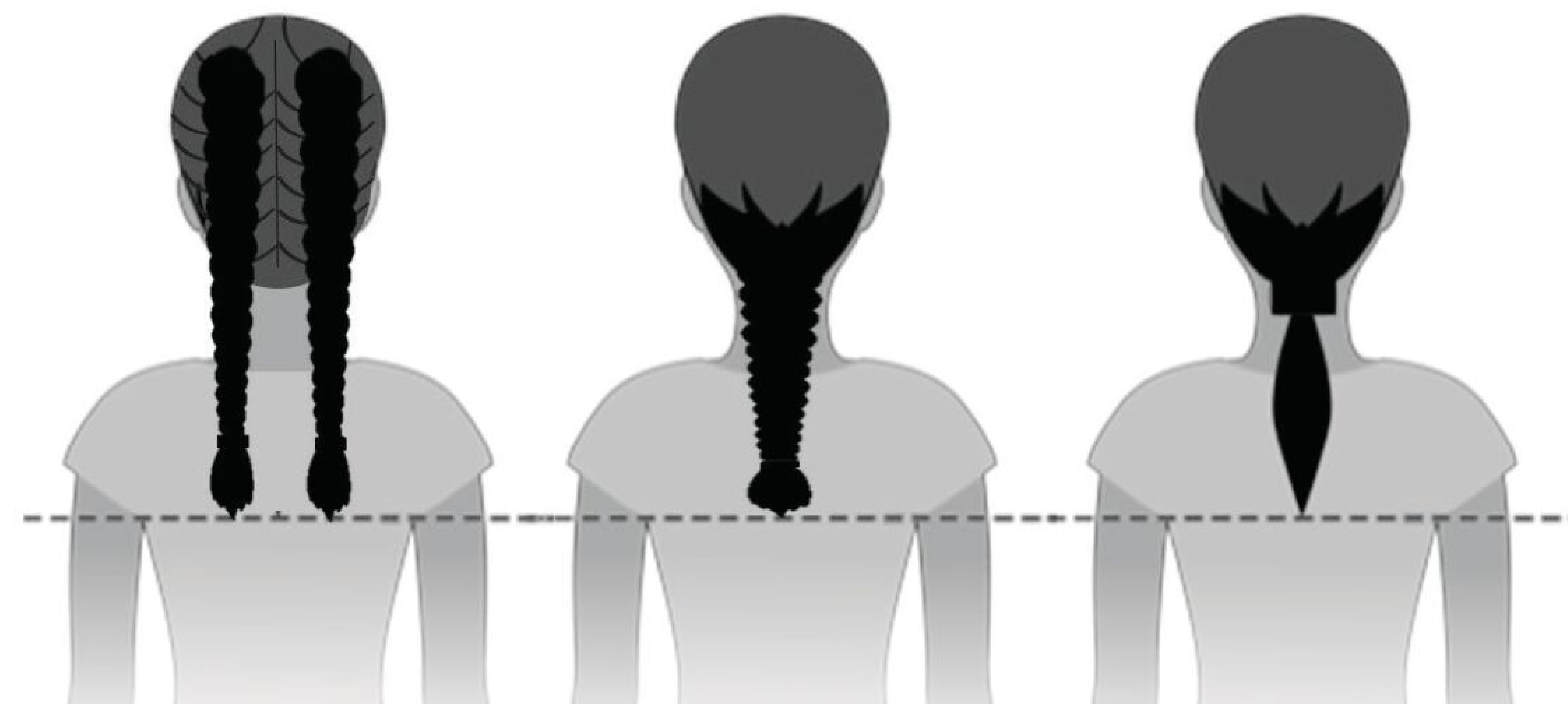
That will also be part of Barrett's legacy, Carlisle said, and it remains to be seen how the Space Command controversy will end up.

Venable lauded Barrett's Air Force for enacting some of the biggest changes to the officer personnel system in a generation by getting rid of below-the-zone promotions and breaking the larger Line of the Air Force group into smaller, better-defined competitive categories.

These kind of changes to the details can sometimes be stymied within an organization, Venable said, but Barrett deserves credit for ensuring the officer changes became reality.

"She stepped into a situation where there was a lot going on, a lot of work to be done, and she stepped up," Carlisle said. "I hope history will show that she was a very, very good secretary of the Air Force."

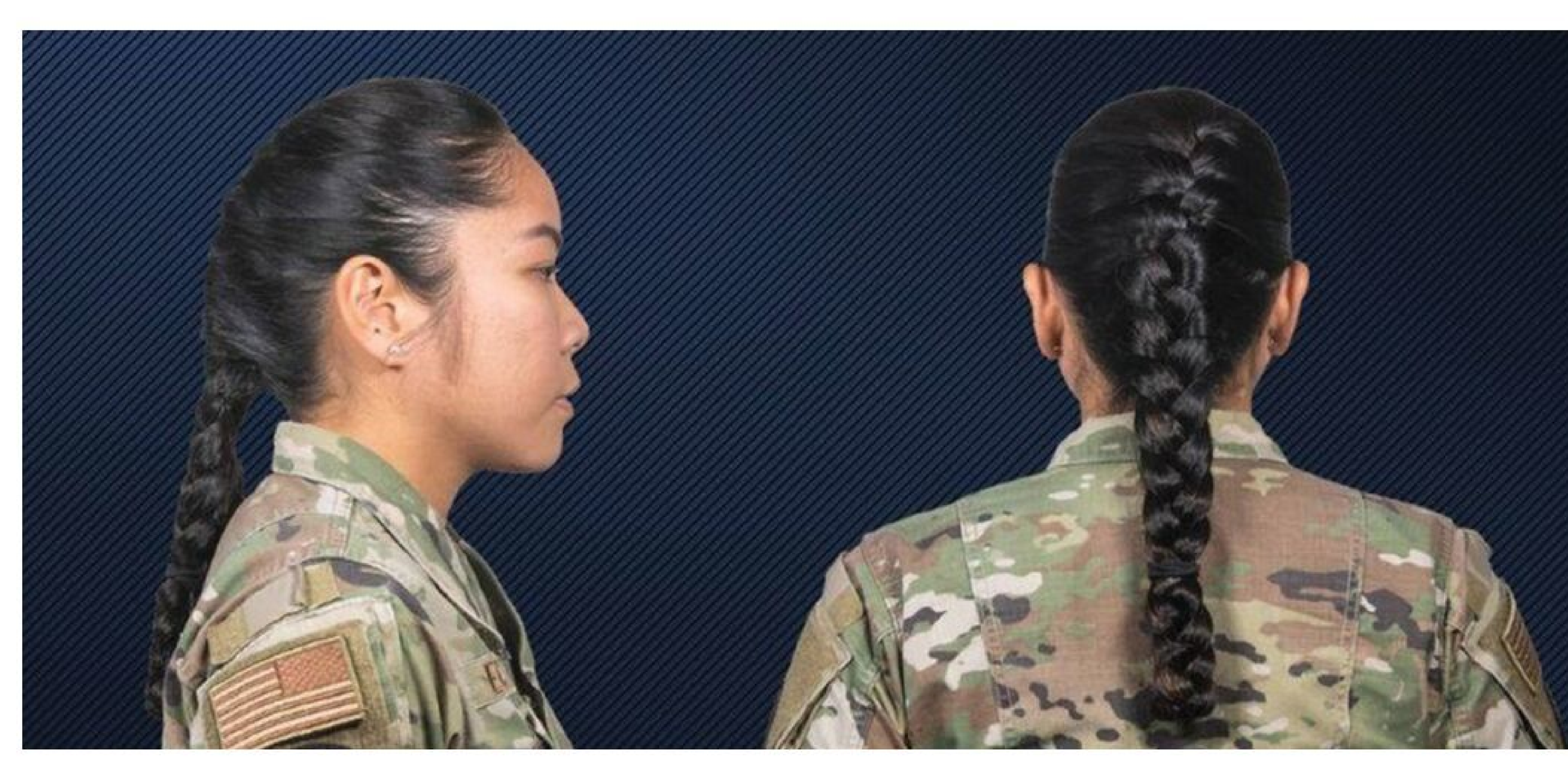
AIR FORCE TO OK BRAIDS, PONYTAILS FOR WOMEN— BUT NO BEARDS FOR MEN



The Air Force in February will relax rules governing how female airmen can wear their hair to allow one or two braids or a ponytail. The service released the above diagram and below photos showing how long women can wear their braids or ponytail.









By Stephen Losey
slosey@militarytimes.com

Female airmen will soon be allowed to wear their hair in one or two braids, or a single ponytail.

Women will also be allowed to wear longer bangs that touch their eyebrows, the Air Force said, but the bangs will not be allowed to cover the eyes.

The revised dress and appearance standards will take effect with the next update to Air Force Instruction 36-2903, slated for February.

"This decision is a commitment to supporting the airmen we need, and sustaining the culture and environment of excellence that will continue to make the Air Force an attractive career choice for airmen and families," Chief of Staff Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown said in the release. "I'm thankful for the feedback and research conducted from a number of women leaders, the Women's Initiative Team, the Air Force uniform board and our joint teammates."

The Air Force decided against further relaxing standards that bar most men from wearing beards.

The idea for these changes came from airmen across the service, part of a crowd-sourced campaign to gather suggestions on how to improve dress and appearance rules.

Thousands of women wrote to the Air Force's Women's Initiative Team last year about the old hair grooming standards. Some women complained that the current approved styles, such as wearing their hair in tight buns, caused damage to women's hair, migraines, and in some cases, hair loss.

A uniform board — including a diverse group of 19 airmen from various ranks, across major commands and headquarters directorates — met virtually last November to discuss dress and appearance rule changes, including the recommendation for hair regulations from the women's team. Brown approved the changes after considering the force's feedback, the board's recommendation, and the professional image and standards of the Air Force.

The Air Force hopes the changes will help improve diversity and inclusion in the ranks by giving women from a variety of races more options.

"In addition to the health concerns we have for our airmen, not all women have the same hair type, and our hair standards should reflect our diverse force," said Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass. "I am pleased we could make this important change for our women service members."

The bulk of the braids or ponytail must not exceed the width of the airman's head, the revised rules say. The length will not be allowed to extend any further than the top of each sleeve inseam at the underarm through the shoulder blades.

Women must still adhere to current rules for occupational safety, fire and health guidance, as well as mishap prevention procedures designed to lessen the potential for hair to get caught in machinery, equipment, power transmission devices or moving parts.

"We remain committed to removing barriers to service," Air Force personnel chief Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly said in the news release. "In an all-volunteer force, we want fully qualified volunteers who are representative of the nation to see us as a great opportunity to maximize their talent and serve."

The board also considered whether to allow more men to wear beards, but ultimately decided against any changes. Unlike the women's hair standards, current male grooming standards carry no known health or hair loss risks, aside from those already covered under existing shaving waivers.

Beards are now allowed for men who have a medical reason, such as for men who suffer from painful razor bumps, or for religious reasons. Muslim, Sikh and Norse Heathen airmen are among those who have received waivers to wear a beard in accordance with their faith.

Female uniformed members of the Space Force, who are called guardians, will follow the Air Force's grooming standards until that service develops its own policy.



Too many airmen
Instructor pilots from Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas prepare to take off in T-38s.

AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ANNE MCCREADY/AIR FORCE

COVID LEFT THE AIR FORCE OVERMANNED.

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO GET OUT EARLY OR GO RESERVE

By Stephen Losey
slosey@militarytimes.com

A series of voluntary force management programs are being offered to some officers and enlisted airmen, in a variety of career fields, as part of an effort to fix a coronavirus-driven overmanning problem.

The voluntary programs include an expanded Palace Chase program, which allows active-duty airmen to serve out the rest of their service commitment in the Air Force Reserve, and limited active-duty service commitment waivers.

The Air Force Personnel Center said the window to apply for these programs will run through April 2.

"Voluntary force management programs provide airmen with flexible options to retire, separate or affiliate at times that suit their personal circumstances and allow the Department of the Air Force to balance certain specialties to ensure we meet the needs of the high-end fight," Col. Richard Cole, chief of the Military Sustainment and Transition Program Division, said in the AFPC press release.

The Air Force was unable to provide additional information as to how many airmen might leave under these programs.

The Air Force is rolling out these voluntary programs to help it lessen a serious overmanning problem, which it believes was caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In December, Air Force personnel chief Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly told reporters the economic turmoil caused by the pandemic likely led to the greatest spike in retention rates in nearly two decades.

Kelly said that as unemployment rose sharply in the pandemic's early days, hundreds of airmen who were planning to retire or separate may have decided it was safer to stay in uniform a little longer.

But this meant that when fiscal 2021 began, the Air Force had already surpassed its year-end active-duty end strength goal of 333,700, which would have been an increase of 900 from 2020. Kelly said Dec. 1 that the Air Force was already more than 900 airmen over where they had hoped to be at the end of the year.

Kelly said then that no involuntary programs were planned for 2021.

Airmen who are eligible for the active-duty service commitment waivers would be able to retire no later than Sept. 1, or separate no later than Sept. 29.

To retire, airmen eligible for those waivers must have at least 20 years of total active federal military service before their requested retirement date. Officers also must have at least 10 years of total active federal commissioned service.

For enlisted airmen, the waivers could allow them to lessen their service commitments incurred due to permanent change-of-station moves, date estimated return from overseas curtailments, and senior non-commissioned officer promotions, AFPC said. For officers, waivers would also apply to PCS moves and DEROS curtailments, as well as tuition assistance, direct accession and extended active-duty ROTC and Officer Training School service commitments.

The expanded Palace Chase program would allow certain airmen in selected specialties and grades to apply to transfer from active duty to an Air Reserve component, the release said.

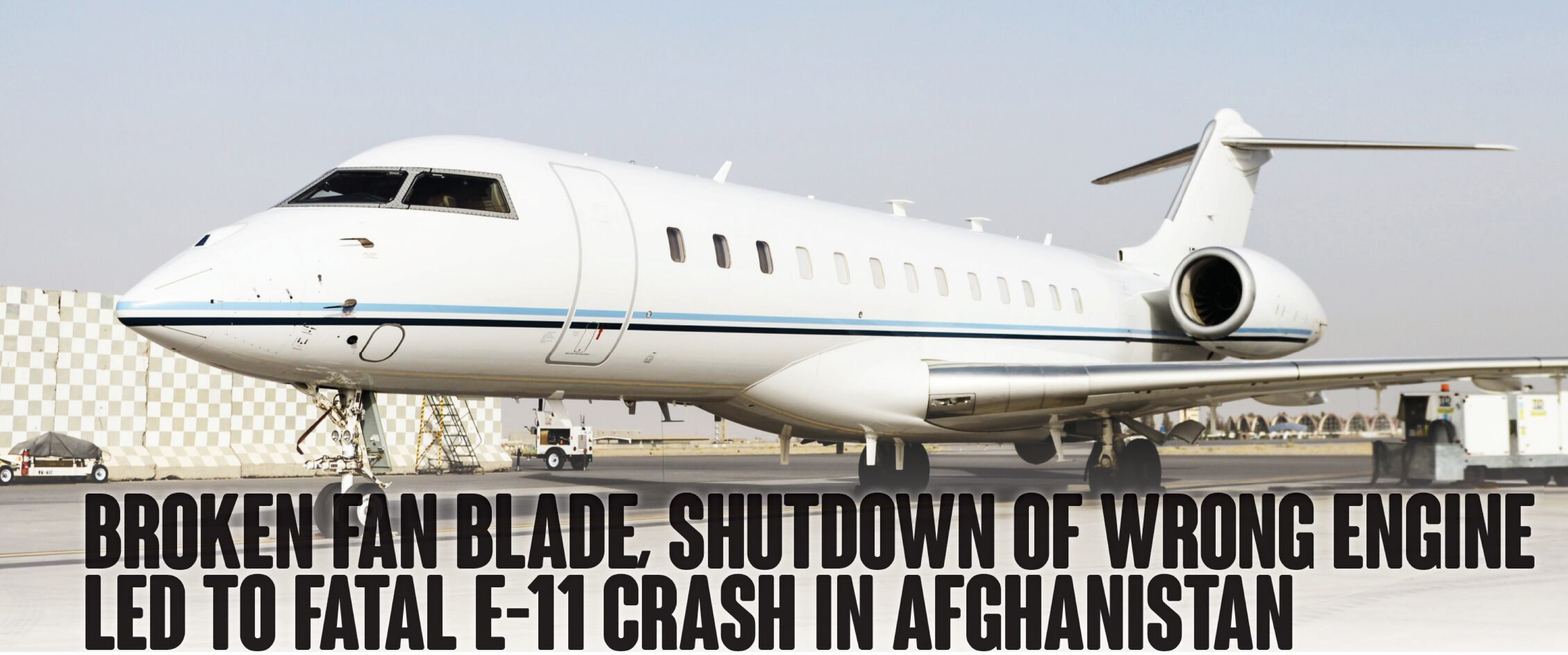
Typically, an enlisted airman transitioning under Palace Chase has to serve two years in the Reserve for every year remaining on his or her service obligation, and officers have to serve three years for every one remaining.

Under the expanded program, the Air Force will allow eligible airmen to serve one reserve year for every remaining active-duty year.

But there's a catch: Airmen whose service commitments are being waived will be required to repay unearned portions of bonuses, special pays, education assistance and other incentive payments.

Palace Chase airmen, however, will not have to return the unearned portion of their bonuses. Recoupment of education costs will be deferred, as long as those airmen finish their Palace Chase obligation.

AFPC said it will process applications on a first-in, first-out basis — but not all eligibile airman are guaranteed approval. Airmen who are in a specialty that is not on the list of eligible jobs can apply on a case-by-case basis.



BROKEN FAN BLADE, SHUTDOWN OF WRONG ENGINE LED TO FATAL E-11 CRASH IN AFGHANISTAN

By Stephen Losey
slosey@militarytimes.com

A broken fan blade that led to engine failure, followed by the pilots' shutoff of the other engine, led to the fatal crash of a Bombardier E-11A communications aircraft in Afghanistan last January, according to an accident investigation report.

Lt. Col. Paul Voss, 46, and Capt. Ryan Phaneuf, 30, died while trying to conduct an emergency landing of their damaged and gliding E-11A in a field in Ghazni province on Jan. 27, 2020.

While the broken fan blade and subsequent engine failure sparked the emergency, the Air Combat Command investigation concluded the crash was caused by the air crew erroneously identifying which engine had failed. As a result, Voss and Phaneuf shut off the wrong engine, leaving the aircraft without any operating engines producing thrust and creating a dual engine-out emergency.

The crew's failure to restart the correct engine in the air, and their attempt to return to Kandahar Air Base, substantially contributed to the mishap, the report said.

Voss and Phaneuf took off from Kandahar at about 11:05 a.m. local time that day to conduct both a mission qualification training flight for Phaneuf and a combat sortie to support Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

They were to serve as a Battlefield Airborne Communications Node, which is sometimes nicknamed "WiFi in the sky," to allow troops using different communications systems, both in the air and on the ground, to share and relay voice, video, images and data. This aircraft's relay capability is especially important in Afghanistan, where the mountainous terrain can sometimes disrupt communications channels.

The flight proceeded uneventfully for about an hour and 45 minutes until a fan blade in the left engine broke free, causing major damage to the engine and its automatic shutdown. The cockpit voice recorder captured the loud bang of the fan blade's breaking, but stopped recording after that for the rest of the flight.

Because the warning signal did not immediately light up for the catastrophically damaged left engine — it took several seconds for its RPMs to drop below the point that would have triggered the signal — the crew didn't immediately know which engine had blown.

The pilots thought the right engine had experienced the emergency, leading them to shut it down instead of the left one. The shutdown meant the plane now had no engines operating, and happened relatively quickly, about 24 seconds after the fan blade broke.

The pilots issued a mayday call reporting their engine failure, and said they hoped to turn back and glide to Kandahar — 230 nautical miles away.

The investigators believe the crew tried an engine restart several times, but were unsuccessful.

The data that was available — though that data was incomplete — showed the right engine's switch had not been moved back to the on position, and there was no sign the crew tried to restart it. Had they tried, they likely would have been able to restart the right engine, the investigators wrote. The crew may have not tried, mistakenly believing the right engine was the damaged one, the report said.

The plane was by that point a glider, and they had no shot at gliding all the way to Kandahar.

The crew had few options left. Other potential landing sites, such as Bagram Air Field, Kabul International Airport, and Forward Operating Base Shank were also beyond reach.

The pilots turned toward FOB Sharana, but didn't have the altitude and airspeed to make it. They tried to land in an unpopulated and snowy field about 21 nautical miles short of the base. But the field, though it appeared mostly flat, had several berms and ditches that were 3 to 6 feet high.

The aircraft appeared to have touched down, but was destroyed in the attempted landing after hitting a smaller berm. Both pilots were killed.

"This tragic accident and the loss of these two Airmen will not be forgotten," said Gen. Mark Kelly, commander of Air Combat Command. "These Airmen gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation while deployed supporting an overseas combat mission. They should be recognized and remembered for their dedication and bravery."

The investigation found no evidence suggesting that maintenance inspections, procedures or personnel contributed to the mishap — though it does not address what may have caused the fan blade to break off.

The report said the pilots may have been startled by the loud bang of the fan blade breaking and the aircraft's severe vibrations.

This may have led them to react immediately and shut the right engine down in an attempt to prevent further damage, without realizing the left engine had been damaged.



Lt. Col. Paul Voss



Capt. Ryan Phaneuf

Lt. Col. Paul Voss and Capt. Ryan Phaneuf were killed Jan. 27, 2020, in the crash of an E-11A battlefield communications aircraft, like the one above, in Afghanistan.

CLOCKWISE: CAPT. KEENAN KUNST/AIR FORCE; COURTESY OF DAVID MORIN; AIR FORCE



Insurrection
Trump supporters clash with police while storming the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, on Jan. 6, 2021.

CRACKDOWN?

SECDEF LAUNCHES FORCE-WIDE REVIEW OF RISKS POSED BY EXTREMISTS IN THE MILITARY

By Todd South
tsouth@militarytimes.com

The sea of protesters-turned-rioters massing near the Capitol on Jan. 6 carried with them pro-Trump signs, American flags and an array of political banners.

Also among the crowd were many emblems of the military community: Some waved Marine Corps flags, many sported military tactical gear, even specific unit patches signifying their time in service.

Those affiliations were real. More than two dozen people who were later charged in crimes stemming from the attack on the Capitol had military ties, including a Virginia Army National Guardsman, a Navy officer, and one retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, dressed in military gear, holding zip ties on the Senate floor. Another veteran is accused of being the leader of the far-right, anti-government extremist group Oath Keepers.

Not all of those who stormed the Capitol that day were military or veterans but, so far, authorities estimate that one in five of those who've been charged criminally were either currently serving in the military or had once worn the uniform.

The links between the insurrection on Capitol Hill and the military community seemed shocking to many leaders and the public overall.

But maybe they shouldn't be.

For decades, domestic extremists have flaunted ties to the U.S. military, seeking to claim the status, credibility and effective tactical training that military service entails.

And for decades top leaders in the military have promised to go after domestic extremists — like militia groups, white supremacists and those who advocate violence against the government — when discovered in the ranks.

Yet, past efforts focused on disciplining individuals rather than addressing a broader problem across the military. Despite finding recent evidence of troops with known ties to extremist groups like the Atomwaffen Division or Identity Evropa, the military leadership's response has never drawn as much institutional support as other high-profile problems like sexual assault, suicide or hazing.

Even today, as the attack on the Capitol has heightened concerns, the Pentagon cannot say how many service members in uniform may have ties to extremist ideologies that are a threat to both the military and the nation at large. The Defense Department has no central tracking of allegations or disciplinary actions related to extremism.

In the past, defense officials have downplayed the issue, claiming the numbers were low and that mere membership in such organizations is not a crime, making it difficult to track.

Military leaders note, correctly, that efforts to tackle the problem aggressively is fraught because the Constitution protects freedom of speech and the law prohibits criminalizing affiliations that may be deemed fundamentally political in nature rather than a threat to harm the public.

But others who study the problem say much more can be done, and the military's ability to enforce standards for good order and discipline gives commanders and senior leaders powerful tools to send a message and remove or punish service members who are identified as a problem.

"The military has unique abilities to set boundaries on conduct that other parts of government don't have," said Katrina Mulligan, the managing director of national security and international policy at the Center for American Progress. "But they have been unevenly applied."

That may soon change. The spate of arrests and investigations involving dozens of current and former service members involved in the Capitol riots has drawn a spotlight to the problem of the military community's ties to domestic extremism.

The new defense secretary, Lloyd Austin, vowed at his confirmation hearing in January to "rid our ranks of racists and extremists, and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity."

He soon acted on that promise.

"Extremism has risen to a top priority as the new secretary called in the service secretaries and joint chiefs of staff in early February, directing them to conduct a 60-day stand-down for leaders to speak with troops about the problem and "get a sense from them about what they're seeing at their level," said Pentagon spokesman John Kirby.

But it won't be easy. As a practical matter, monitoring the activities of 1.3 million active-duty service members is challenging. Culturally, it's not a problem leaders have prioritized over the years. And legally, it's difficult to distinguish between the casual gestures of some troops and the real warning signs of potentially illegal extremist activity by others.

Tougher enforcement is now under consideration at the highest levels of government.

Some measures under consideration include: better vetting of incoming recruits, monitoring social media for those in sensitive positions, adding questions about extremism to command climate surveys, a tattoo database so commanders know what to look for, increased training and an accountability mindset that encourages reporting.

Cumulatively, the impact would be swift, with career-ending discharges for anyone involved in extremist activities.

Advocates who support a more aggressive crackdown inside the military point to the era of Don't Ask Don't Tell to show that the military has the capability to police personal behavior among troops.

"The military put a lot of effort ... I think ridiculously, trying to find homosexuals," said former Air Force Chief Prosecutor Don Christensen, who now heads the advocacy group Protect our Defenders.

"If they wanted to stop something, they can. The question is, how much effort are they putting into investigations?"

Christensen pointed to the services' task forces for child pornography and said they should set up the same for extremism.

"They already know how to do it," Christensen said. "I think any military leader, if asked, would admit that white supremacy, extremism would be a threat to good order and discipline, and you would have a legitimate reason for doing this."

WHY THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT

The commander in chief is already talking about the problem. President Joe Biden said in his inaugural address that the "rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism," were threats the nation must confront and defeat.

More specifically to the military and the Pentagon's response will be the new defense secretary.

Austin, an African American who grew up in the Deep South, graduated from West Point in 1975 and spent 41 years in the Army, brings a personal perspective to the problem that could have a far-reaching impact.

Austin recalled his time in the mid-1990s when he was a lieutenant colonel with one of the Army's elite groups, the 82nd Airborne Division. In 1995, racist paratroopers in the unit murdered a Black couple near Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

A subsequent investigation uncovered nearly two dozen skinheads in the division and sparked a global review of extremism in the Army's ranks.

"We woke up one day and discovered that we had extremist elements in our ranks, and they did bad things that we certainly held them accountable for," Austin said at his confirmation hearing.

"But we discovered that the signs for that activity were there all along. We just didn't know what to look for or what to pay attention to — but we learned from that."

There were warning signs, Austin said, but leaders didn't see them.

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JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Marine Corps flag
Demonstrators waived the Marine Corps' iconic Eagle, Globe and Anchor symbol as they stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6.

ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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"I can tell you that most of us were embarrassed that we didn't know what to look for, and we didn't really understand that being engaged more with your people on these types of issues can pay big dividend," Austin said.

"We can never take our hands off the wheel on this," he said. "This has no place in the military of the United States of America."

After the Capitol riot, U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., sent a letter to Biden, Austin and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines asking the Pentagon to begin screening social media accounts of service members with sensitive roles for any white supremacist or extremist ties.

She asked the president to elevate white supremacy and violent extremism as a critical threat, which would raise scrutiny during the security clearance background checks.

She urged Austin to direct the services to review standards for social media activity of recruits to help identify such activity.

Events predating the Capitol attack signal an appetite for countering extremism.

Last year, the services banned display of the Confederate Flag in public places. Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger led the way when he directed that all Confederate-related paraphernalia be removed from Marine bases, saying that the symbol has, "the power to inflame feelings of division." The other services have since followed with similar actions.

Also, days before the Capitol riot, Congress passed a law ordering the Defense Department to rename military installations that currently honor the Confederate States of America. The legislation passed Jan. 1 will create a commission to rename within three years the military installations and Navy ships that commemorate anyone who served in the Confederacy.

Weeks before the Capitol riot, then-acting defense secretary, Christopher C. Miller, directed Pentagon officials to toughen policies and regulations banning extremist activities among troops, and update the Uniform Code of Military Justice to specifically address extremist threats.

A former top official at the Pentagon told Military Times that the latest comments from both the Commander-in-Chief and the new defense secretary hold promise.

"We all know that personnel issues do not normally rise to the level of attention that they sometimes deserve. However, the events of the last few years, culminating with the Jan. 6 attack on our Capitol have revealed to America, military included, that we have serious issues that must be addressed," said Todd Weiler, former assistant defense secretary for manpower and reserve affairs during the Obama Administration.

"There is no doubt that these issues will garner the attention of the new administration and I am confident that they will be addressed," he said.

WHY IT WON'T BE EASY

The thicket of laws and politics that the Pentagon will have to navigate will not be easy.

Some monitoring of social media is allowed under military policies and regulations, but it will be tricky to strike the right balance between increasing enforcement without veering into an overly aggressive surveillance effort that critics will call a witch hunt, legal experts say.

It's unconstitutional to make mere membership in an organization a crime, said Eugene Fidell, Yale Law School military law expert. But that can be discouraged by other means; for example officials could bar enlistment or revoke a security clearance, which could end a career without using the UCMJ, he said.

"For First Amendment reasons, mere 'paper' membership in an organization, whether it be the communist party during the McCarthy era or, today, a gang or a group that believes in white supremacy, is not a crime. Taking a leadership role in such an organization is another matter," Fidell said.

The Army, for example, prohibits collecting, recording or reporting "information concerning purely political activities and personalities, or disorders in which no crime is indicated or suspected"

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Navy vet
U.S. Capitol rioter and so-called "QAnon Shaman" Jacob Chansley, a Navy veteran, is facing federal criminal charges.

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by its criminal investigators, according to Army Regulation 195-2.

However, there is precedent for this kind of easily shared data. The 21st Century Sailor office, in the Navy's chief of personnel office, keeps a spreadsheet of hazing reports from around the service.

Lecia Brooks is the chief of staff for the Southern Poverty Law Center, an advocacy group that monitors and reports on extremist and hate groups.

"I don't think it's rocket science, it's a commitment to be able to do it. If you can screen for psychological and health concerns, you can screen for signs of radicalization," Brooks said.

While the president and defense secretary have pushed the importance of combating extremism, the groundwork falls to individual services and unit leaders to identify bad behaviour and for commanders to respond to it.

And to do that effectively will require resources — specifically more money and people.

"We get a lot of help from external law enforcement agencies with these sorts of things because of the domestic nature" of the offenses, outgoing Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said during a Jan. 18 interview.

"But do we have enough resources in place to truly get after this in the appropriate way? We're looking at that, too."

HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

Last year the FBI notified the Pentagon that it had opened criminal investigations that involved 143 current or former service members. Sixty-eight of those involved domestic extremism and the vast majority involved veterans, not active-duty troops, a defense official told Military Times.

Unlike suicide and sexual harassment or sexual assault, neither the Pentagon nor the services centrally track extremism, whether its links to domestic terrorism or the white supremacist ideology that often overlaps with it.

In the case of military suicide, Congress directs the Pentagon to produce a yearly report on its suicide fatalities, including research on the demographics affected most. The DoD also uses the Rand Military Workplace Study to gather anecdotal data on toxic command climates and sexual harassment.

No similar tracking exists for extremism. The Pentagon reported in 2020 that only 21 service members had been disciplined or discharged over the previous five years for extremist activities. Anti-extremist groups say they find higher results on an annual basis through publicly available online research. Many experts are skeptical that this data reflects the true scope of the problem.

UCMJ AND OTHER TOOLS

Step one will be for the military to find and identify those involved in extremist groups and activities. Past efforts don't leave much room for optimism without increased tools, training, resources and priorities.

Scott Barfield was working as a military police investigator at Fort Lewis, Washington in 2002 when his supervisor assigned him to work with local civilian police on gang cases.

It wasn't until they taught him what to look for, and where to look for it, that Barfield started finding soldiers who were linked to white supremacists or involved with gangs and other extremist groups.

Over the next five years, Barfield identified about 80 soldiers at Fort Lewis with links to extremist or white supremacist group members.

Those numbers, at one Army installation, were nearly five times what the Army said it saw across the entire force for the same period.

But Barfield met resistance from top Army officials, who denied the military police investigator's claims that the problem was so widespread. Barfield resigned from his civilian investigator job when he was told he'd be transferred to the traffic division. He now works in civilian law enforcement.

"There's no way in my mind that I can fathom that the problem has disappeared or severely reduced since I left," Barfield said in a recent interview with Military Times.

He recalled that some commanders took the issue seriously and punished the soldiers with ties to extremism, while other commanders said they needed the guys for deployments, and took little or no action.

Barfield faulted the high turnover of most military police and a lack of training and lack of coordination with local law enforcement.

In February 2020, at a hearing on Capitol Hill about white supremacy in the military, some lawmakers called for adding a standalone UCMJ article addressing extremism.

But legal experts say that may not be necessary — existing articles and regulations cover extremist activities, it's a matter of enforcing them.

"In fact, a host of formal and informal sanctions are available, including administrative reprimands, reenlistment, promotion, performance evaluations, duty assignments, special training, and various kinds of privileges," Fidell said.

Prosecutors can pursue criminal charges if troops serve in leadership roles in a hate group or anti-government group or if they commit crimes through their conduct with that group.

RECRUITING

The threat of extremism poses major threats to military recruiters. One concern is that the perception that parts of the military are sympathetic to extremist views could corrode the military's culture and hurt the Pentagon's efforts to recruit a more diverse force.

"If the military starts looking like it's exclusively a good old boys network of soon-to-be KKK members we're going to have a tough time recruiting in the future," Marine veteran Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Arizona, said during a hearing on recruiting last year.

Another risk is that the recruiting process, which brings more than 200,000 young people into the services every year, could be inadvertently welcoming extremists who could fuel the problem inside the military and, at the same time, gain valuable military training that could be used later in life to support extremist activities.

In the age of social media, the Pentagon is trying to create a "multitiered screening process" that will enable "a holistic view of each applicant," according to Stephanie Miller, who was the Pentagon's director of accessions last year.

In 2020, the Pentagon launched a centralized screening capability that vets all new recruits to identify and resolve "indicators of questionable allegiance," Miller said during a February 2020 House

WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES



Mugshot
Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Larry Rendall Brock, Jr., was arrested after he was photographed wearing body armor on the floor of the Senate chamber.

GRAPEVINETEXAS POLICE DEPARTMENT VIA AP

Armed Services Committee hearing.

"We believe we have been effective at screening for individuals that have extremist ideologies or support extremist groups, but we continuously review our policies, our practices, and our methods for improvement," Miller said.

At the same hearing, Garry Reid, the Pentagon's then-director for defense intelligence, said the department was still developing the tools to review social media information during every background investigation, but warned that there are a number of pitfalls to such an approach.

VETERANS

While current servicemembers spouting hate-filled rants online or participating in the Capitol riot or other plots is troubling, the bulk of those found with a military connection in extremist causes are veterans.

For military leaders, those veterans are out of reach of military discipline of the UCMJ, unless they are retired, in which case the military can pursue a court martial and go after their benefits.

Nevertheless, veterans create both an image problem for the services and a real danger to the larger community with their tactical know-how and outsized influence among extremist groups.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America CEO Jeremy Butler told Military Times there's no doubt extremism and racism are problems within military and veteran communities.

But for too long the problems of extremist behavior both in the ranks and among veterans has been overlooked or diminished by those veterans group leaders, Butler, a Navy reservist, said.

"Too often veterans groups are reluctant to do that. They don't want to anger some of their membership," he said. "We as leaders of veterans groups can't be shy about speaking out, condemning veterans or military who take part in those things."

Chris Purdy, an Army veteran and project manager for Veterans for American Ideals, echoed concerns. The VFAI aims to have its members and other veterans serve beyond their time in uniform, he said. And part of that is holding other veterans accountable.

"The only people veterans are going to listen to are other veterans," Purdy said.

VFAI recently formed two task forces to fight the problem, one to track online hate among purported veterans and another to make recommendations to counter extremism among veterans.

Even though numbers of extremists might be small when compared to the vast majority of servicemembers and veterans, Butler said that calling it out will make a difference.

"You have to be open about acknowledging those problems if you're going to fix those problems," Butler said.

Additional reporting by Meghann Myers, Stephen Losey, Karen Jowers Kyle Rempfer, Geoff Ziezulewicz and Philip Athey.



Capitol clash
Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as people storm the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 in Washington, D.C.

BRENT STIRTON/GETTY IMAGES

THE ATTACK ON CAPITOL HILL

WHY THE NATIONAL GUARD WAITED TO RESPOND AS THE RIOT SPREAD

By Meghann Myers and **Howard Altman**
mmyers@militarytimes.com / haltman@militarytimes.com

Hundreds of National Guard troops were posted in the streets of Washington, D.C., on an early January afternoon, but there was little they could do to respond as pro-Trump rioters overran the Capitol.

Investigations were forthcoming to determine whether the Capitol Police were undermanned and unprepared for the threat posed by the rallies against the results of the 2020 election, but the answer as to why troops posted blocks away were unable to respond to the siege was as simple — or as complicated — as a morass of bureaucracy.

Simply put, the National Guard only shows up to D.C. when they've been invited, and the Capitol Police did not extend that invitation until after the Jan. 6 breach, according to a source with knowledge of the process, who was not authorized to speak about it on the record.

The several hundred troops posted around downtown D.C. were there at the request of Mayor Muriel Bowser to support local police.

"We had worked out that the support we were providing the [D.C. Metropolitan] Police Department would be on traffic control points," the source said, including downtown subway stations and select blocks, where teams of two guardsmen and several vehicles were keeping the streets clear of cars.

Bowser put in a request for support Dec. 31, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy told reporters a day after the Capitol breach.

The Defense Department was in contact with Capitol Police ahead of protests, Kenneth Rapuano, the assistant defense secretary for homeland defense, told reporters during a press call. They asserted they would not be requesting National Guard support, he said.

DCNG announced it had mobilized 340 troops to support MPD, but that organization's jurisdiction does not cover any federal land within the District, and so its officers — and its Guard support — could not have just rushed to the Capitol.

Further, if they had gone there, Guard troops who had been acting in a traffic control capacity, not as law enforcement, would not have been able or authorized to forcibly push back rioters or help clear the building, a task that fell to the Capitol Police and the FBI tactical forces they requested to help out.

So, when chaos unfolded and reports surfaced that there had been a request for additional Guard troops and the Defense Department had denied it, here's what really happened.

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Capitol confrontation

D.C. National Guard members arrive to push back protesters from the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

KYLE REMPFER/STAFF

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Because of D.C.'s finicky federal status, any entity — whether it's the mayor, or the Interior Department, which controls federal parks within the District — has to put in a request for National Guard troops through the Army secretary, who gets it endorsed by the defense secretary.

The Capitol's request for Guard back-up went beyond what Bowser had already gotten approved, so it needed a new sign-off.

"We quickly worked to move our resources forward in support of Metro PD and the Capitol Police," McCarthy said.

The process took about an hour, the source told Military Times, from the time McCarthy received it around 2 p.m. on Jan. 6.

"We wanted to make sure, based off what we saw developing, that that was an acceptable use, all the way up to the SECDEF, which didn't take long," the source said, including about half an hour spent relaying the request to acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller.

It was 3:36 p.m. when White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany tweeted that President Donald Trump had directed the activation of more troops. Technically, Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told reporters the following day, the president had given Miller the green light to call up National Guard days earlier.

Alternative reports asserted that Miller had spoken with Vice President Mike Pence about the decision. But that would have been more of a courtesy to keep the White House informed, the source familiar told Military Times, not a request for permission.

At 3:52 p.m., Hoffman tweeted that Miller had mobilized more D.C. Guard to respond, a characteristic sequence of announcements during which the Pentagon has been reluctant to speak before the White House, despite having the lead on decision-making.

Once activated, the D.C. Guardsmen made their way to the armory, where they donned protective gear, loaded up vehicles and made their way to the Capitol.

They were there before a mandatory curfew began at 6 p.m., and stayed into the night to perform crowd control on protestors who refused to pack it in.

THEN AND NOW

The chaos unfolding in D.C. feels very familiar, after weeks of protests erupted in June. Then, the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man who prosecutors say was killed at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer, sparked nationwide demonstrations, some of which turned violent.

After one such demonstration on May 31, resulting in the burning of a church near the White House, several federal and local authorities called for National Guard support and thousands of troops streamed in from as far as Utah.

June photos of Guard troops on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial circulated anew, with questions as to why there were so many troops on hand during the Black Lives Matter protests, but so few security personnel on the steps of the Capitol on Jan. 6, as hundreds of pro-Trump rioters breached the building and terrorized lawmakers and their staffs within.

The answer is two-fold: The June photos are from days after the initial clashes, after security forces from multiple agencies flooded D.C. to protect commercial blocks and historical sites; and in order to have had that presence the day of the January riots, Capitol Police would have needed to anticipate what kind of threat they faced.

There must be an investigation into why National Guard troops were not mobilized to the Capitol earlier to stop the insurrectionists from storming the building and disrupting the 2020 presidential election certification process, a former Trump Cabinet member, who asked not to be named, told Military Times the day of the breach.

"Why wasn't the D.C. National Guard, and perhaps Guard troops from Maryland and Virginia, there ahead of time?" the former Cabinet member said, speaking on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns.

Legislators from both the Democratic and Republican sides of Congress have called for an investigation into whether the Capitol Police were unprepared, the Associated Press reported Jan.7.

"It makes absolutely no sense that they were not there ahead of time," the former Trump Cabinet member said. "This was not an intelligence failure. The president invited these folks to Washington. He met with them and incited them. Everyone knew they were coming for a significant period of time."

The investigation should include questions about why there were two different responses between the Jan. 6 reaction by Guard and law enforcement agencies and what took place in D.C. on June 2.

"Look what happened last spring," said the former Trump Cabinet member. "The president activated the National Guard and strolled to church with a Bible in his hand. The Black Lives Matter folks were not doing anything comparable to what the Trump supporters were doing. ... They had a huge show of force then — why not [the day of the Capitol building breach]?"

The former Trump Cabinet member also questioned whether Trump's appointment of Miller, and others who support him, to positions at the Pentagon was designed with this response in mind.

"It wasn't just for Afghanistan," the former Cabinet member said, adding that Army Gen. Scott Miller, who commands U.S. forces in Afghanistan, was on board with the projected reduction in troops there, suggested so that Trump would not order a complete withdrawal. "Why was Miller put in, if not for nefarious reasons?"

As for suggestions by some that the rioters in the Capitol were actually Antifa members in disguise, the former Trump cabinet member was blunt.

"This is absolute bullshit. Totally, completely wrong," the former Cabinet member said. "The president invites them to come to Washington, speaks to them in front of the White House and incites them to march to the Hill. And crazy Rudy Giuliani says they should do this by combat. And now they are saying it is other people? That's crazy."



Outgoing
Soldiers fire their mortar system in support of operations in Laghman Province, Afghanistan.

SGT. JORDAN TRENT/ARMY

DRAWDOWNS IN GERMANY, AFGHANISTAN UNCERTAIN

By Meghann Myers
mmyers@militarytimes.com

The Pentagon is still working with a May deadline for a full withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, but a Defense Department spokesman told reporters last month the way ahead is unclear.

The White House under President Donald Trump spent much of 2020 beating the drum for a full withdrawal from Afghanistan, which manifested in a reduction from 8,000 early in the year to 2,500 as of Jan. 15.

But the Biden administration is revisiting the conditions of that withdrawal, specifically the Taliban's commitment to making sure the Afghan people have a chance at self-governance, and that the country won't once again become a terrorism home base.

"Without them meeting their commitments to renounce terrorism and to stop the violent attacks on the Afghan national security forces — and by dint of that, the Afghan people — it's very hard to see a specific way forward for the negotiated settlement," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Jan. 28. "But we're still committed to that."

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is looking for a reasonable settlement that would end American presence in Afghanistan, Kirby added, but conditions will have to be met.

"Thus far the Taliban has been, to put it politely, reticent to meet their requirements," he said.

Throughout 2020, the DoD repeated that a withdrawal would be conditional — based on a reduction in Taliban violence in the country and the group's cutting ties with al-Qaida — but as troop levels dwindled from 8,000 to 4,000 in the spring, then down to 2,500 in January, reports remained that the Taliban had done neither.

Days before his ouster, then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper told Military Times that he had hesitated to publicly push back against the White House's informal calls for further reduced numbers.

"Imagine this: 'Disregard what the president said. This is still the plan,' " Esper suggested. "Now, if I were the president, I'd say, 'Really? Here you go. Here's a written piece of paper. You're coming home by December.' "

With the White House and DoD now back on the same page, the two are in "wait-and-see" mode.

No decisions have been made about the next steps, Kirby said, though senior military leaders agree that the numbers on the ground now are enough to do the mission.

The 2,500 troops still on the ground are by and large a counter-terror force, focused on ISIS and al-Qaida activity in the country. That's down from what was a multipurpose force in recent years, with thousands of train-advise-assist troops working with the Afghan security forces on mounting their own response to the Taliban.

"We obviously want to see a responsible end to this war," Kirby said. "We obviously want to see successful negotiated settlements to end it. We obviously want to see those settlements include the Taliban and the elected Afghan government. But we have a commitment to the Afghanistan and the Afghan security forces that we take seriously."

Meanwhile, a plan announced last summer to withdraw nearly 12,00 troops from Germany is still on the table.

"Without question, the issues of U.S, force presence and levels in Germany came up, clearly," Kirby said of Austin's Jan. 27 call with German Federal Minister of Defense Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer.

Austin plans to take a global look at force posture, Kirby said, including in Europe.

"What he did assert to the defense minister was that whatever decision we make, we'll do it in consultation with her and her government," Kirby said, nodding to the surprise from German officials after Esper announced in July that nearly 12,000 troops would be pulled out of Germany. "There won't be any surprises."

That drawdown includes several moving parts, including moving U.S. European Command headquarters from Germany to Belgium, moving an Air Force squadron to Italy and sending the entire 2nd Cavalry Regiment back to the U.S., to be replaced by a rotation of armored units to Eastern Europe.

"I don't want you to take away from this answer that there will be or won't be any specific change," Kirby said.

VA LOANS EXPAND FOR GUARD, COVID-19 VETS

By Davis Winkie
davis.winkie@militarytimes.com

Early career National Guard troops who supported COVID-19 response this year may soon be eligible for Veterans Affairs home loan benefits, thanks to a provision in this year's Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act.

President Donald Trump signed the legislation into law on Jan. 5.

Under the law, Guard troops who have served at least 90 days of qualifying Title 32 active-duty service, including a stint of at least 30 days, will be newly eligible for the loan.

The expanded eligibility is applied retroactively, too.

Tens of thousands of Guard members logged qualifying service in 2020 as part of the nationwide COVID-19 response.

At the mission's peak on May 12, about 47,100 Guard troops were on Title 32 orders for pandemic response, according to National Guard Bureau data shared with Military Times.

Previously, National Guard troops could only become eligible for the VA loan benefit in one of two ways: 90 days of federal active-duty service or six years of retirement-creditable service in the Guard or another reserve component.

Only Title 10 orders — which come in the event of a federal mobilization for deployment — counted towards the 90-day threshold, though.

Now that has changed.

The bill is "Congress' recognition that the benefits gap [between full-time National Guard duty and active duty] is no longer appropriate," said John Goheen, communications director for the National Guard Association of the United States, in a phone interview.

He said the benefits need "to be more reflective of what the nation is asking of its guardsmen and reservists." NGAUS previously made the home loan eligibility expansion a legislative priority for the group, which advocates on behalf of Guard troops on Capitol Hill.

Disclosure: The author of this article, Davis Winkie, is a member of NGAUS.



Cleaning up
Navy recruits wash their hands in preparation for chow on board Fort McCoy, an Army training center in western Wisconsin.

MC3 NIKITA CUSTER/NAVY

SOME SERVICES UPPING THEIR RECRUITING GOALS

By Meghann Myers
mmyers@militarytimes.com

A down economy is notoriously fertile ground for military recruiting, setting up an opportunity for the services to shore up their end strengths while the civilian job market is in crisis. In the wake of massive unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, recruiters have the opportunity to bring in more high-aptitude recruits, an easier feat when the economy is in a downturn.

The Army, Air Force and Marine Corps have all upped their recruiting goals this year after the COVID-19 pandemic slowed the number of incoming recruits in 2020. The increases coincide with a long-term plan to grow the Army, while the Air Force is overmanned and the Marine Corps is drawing down its manpower.

"It's not just that the services are more likely to meet their recruiting missions, but they're more likely to meet them with better-qualified, higher-quality young people," Beth Asch, a Rand Corp. researcher whose recruiting research reports go back three decades, told Military Times on Jan. 28.

The increased recruiting goals come after last year's tough environment slowed accession and forced more recruiting efforts online.

While the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps all met their 2020 active-duty recruiting targets, which often fluctuate through the year based on retention, they did it in a mostly remote environment.

Now, they're taking what they've learned and putting it to the test.

"The important in-person conversations and interaction so integral to our systematic recruiting process were temporarily shut down nationwide at the height of the pandemic, and our Marine Recruiters had to pivot toward digital efforts," Gunnery Sgt. Justin Kronenberg, Marine Corps Recruiting Command spokesman, told Military Times. "Thankfully, we have been training our Marines on these communication methods for several years and continue to reinforce digital engagement tactics through training and leadership."

The Marine Corps' 2021 goal shows the biggest increase, with the active-duty enlisted target jumping from 28,048 to 29,600, or 1,552 more.

That's closer to the goals from the three years preceding 2020, when enlisted targets were around 32,000. At the same time, the active-duty officer goal is down, from 1,352 in 2020 to 1,206 this year.

"Some of the things we developed this year that will probably endure include creating more digital recruiter support materials like videos for virtual presentations, continued investment in app-based mobile technologies, like our USMC Squad Bay application, and research to better understand any lasting impacts the pandemic may have on youth propensity to serve," Kronenberg said.

The Army managed to slightly overshoot its 2020 goals, according to data, bringing in 53 more active-duty soldiers than the planned 61,200. The service, which is working toward a goal of 500,000 active soldiers, with 486,000 by the end of 2022, has been adjusting its yearly recruiting goals to balance its end-strength targets.

For that reason, a spokeswoman for the Army G-1 declined to give Military Times an accessions goal for 2021, but offered that this year's end-strength increase goal is between 1,000 and 1,500.

"We fully expect 2021 to remain challenging for America and for our recruiters," Lt. Col. Junel Jeffrey said. "The Army will continue to encourage creativity and innovation from recruiters in the field, because we know that they know best what works in their areas."

However, according to the service's fiscal year 2021 budget request, it was hoping to recruit 72,000 new soldiers this year.

The Air Force is shooting for 28,738 active-duty enlisted accessions this year, with 1,379 officers.

"Since many in-person events have been cancelled, Air Force recruiters will be using social media, digital engagement, virtual engagements, etc., to assist with the recruiting mission," Leslie Brown, an Air Force Recruiting Service spokeswoman, said.

That's up more than 2,000 enlisted airmen and over 100 officers from 2020's goals.

The Navy is the lone service to reduce its accession goal, shooting for about 38,000 new enlisted sailors this year, down from last year's 39,600.

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'A LOT MORE UNCERTAINTY'

Despite the logistical challenge of more remote recruiting, decades of research show that economic strife drives military recruiting, with the promise of regular paychecks, housing, health care and education benefits.

Joan Yazze Gallegos, who lost her job doing social media for a New Mexico casino, told her local Albuquerque ABC affiliate that the layoff prompted her to enlist.

"The Army offered me stability, a debt-free future," she told the station. "It offered me a pride I have, to fit in with my family, as well as more self-confidence with myself."

Pandemic unemployment hit young people particularly hard, according to a Brookings Institution report published in September. While U.S. unemployment saw an overall bump of 11.2 percent between February and April, unemployment among 16-to-19-year-olds jumped nearly 21 percent.

"The result is that while young people age 16 [to] 29 make up less than a quarter of the labor force, they accounted for about a third of the rise in the unemployment rate between February and April of this year," the report found.

By July, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, youth employment was still down, about 10 percent less than the same time period in 2019. The drop is particularly notable because the summer months usually show a spike in youth employment.

Multiple studies and reviews have shown that a booming economy can damper military recruiting, while a shaky one makes the military a more attractive option.

While graduating high school seniors are the military's target recruiting demographics, and their biggest competition is college, the uncertainty of the pandemic and its economic fallout means more opportunity to offer a stable income, job experience and education benefits to 18-to-24-year-olds.

"So we certainly can expect that if the economy is in the situation it's in now, if nothing else changed, we expect recruiting to improve," Asch said.

Upticks in recruiting have happened during recessions going back to the 1980s, she added.

"The recent economic downturn has improved recruiting and retention and has allowed the services to reduce use of enlistment and reenlistment bonuses," according to the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, a report done every four years that analyzes pay and bonuses and how they help shape the force.

"However, this improvement is expected to diminish as civilian economic conditions improve," according to the report, which covered 2008 to 2012, during the Great Recession and the beginnings of the economic recovery that followed it.

While anecdotally, the recruiting environment can be more fertile during a down economy, Asch said the biggest change to note is the type of recruits the services are able to attract.

"The real metric of how hard recruiting is, is the share of the recruits who are high-aptitude, high school diploma graduates," she said.

When the economy is booming, the services have to put more recruiters on the ground, spend more on marketing and shell out hefty, six-figure bonuses to compete with the civilian job market.

The COVID-19 recession has an extra layer of anxiety, because it's not just about the regular ups and downs of the economic cycle.

There's an understanding that things might never get back to exactly the way they were, especially when it comes to employment, now that many companies have learned how to function on a skeleton staff or with totally remote employees. What will that mean for job prospects?

"There's just a lot more uncertainty," Asch said. "It's not just the uncertainty of how long is this recession going to last? But what is employment going to look like?"

That could be another boon for the military, which is able to offer a degree of predictability for its members.

Yes, there is the possibility of going to war and being killed in combat, but more assuredly, you know you're going to be paid twice a month, move every few years and grow in rank and responsibility if you follow the formula.

"I would suspect that greater uncertainty would actually make recruiting better," Asch said. "The thing about the military is it's offering qualified young people a career, and there's certainty associated with it."

Not only has that had an effect on retention, which is at record-highs, but it could help attract people toward service.

"At the end of the day, the state of the economy does affect how many people eventually come into the military," she added.

DoD CIVILIANS WON'T BE SHOPPING AT THE EXCHANGES

By Karen Jowers
kjowers@militarytimes.com



TARYN HAGERMAN/ARMY

A proposal to give military exchange shopping privileges to more than a half million Department of Defense civilians is dead, according to defense officials.

"DoD is not pursuing military exchange access for DoD civilian employees at this time," said DoD spokeswoman Lisa Lawrence, in response to a question from Military Times. She had no comment about why the proposal has been dropped.

This is a reversal in direction for DoD since October, when an official said the proposal to give exchange shopping privileges to DoD civilians was working its way through the final stages of the approval process.

At that time, the official said it would probably be after Election Day before the initiative got final approval. It was expected to bring in about 575,000 new eligible customers into exchanges, said Berry Patrick, who works in the DoD Office of Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Nonappropriated Fund Policy, during an Oct. 20 virtual conference of the American Logistics Association.

There are about 796,000 DoD civilians in the U.S., but about 221,000 of those employees already have exchange benefits resulting from another beneficiary category such as retiree or military spouse, he said. The new benefit would have applied to both appropriated fund and nonappropriated fund employees, he said. The shopping benefit would have applied only for exchanges, not commissaries. DoD civilians stationed outside the U.S. have exchange shopping privileges.

Nicole Russell, government relations deputy director for the National Military Family Association, said the organization is aware of the differing opinions surrounding the proposal, while acknowledging that NMFA represents the interests of military families, not DoD civilians.

Some active duty members and family members contend that the benefit was not intended for DoD civilians, she noted. Commissaries and exchanges exist primarily for active-duty service members and their families.

OBSERVATION POST



She marches on
"'Ashley's War' ultimately became a story of friendship, love and valor..."

'ASHLEY'S WAR' IS COMING TO THE BIG SCREEN

By J.D. Simkins
jsimkins@militarytimes.com

In August 2011, Lt. Ashley White Stumpf joined an entirely female Army cultural support team, or CST, that would soon deploy to Afghanistan into combat alongside various elite elements of the military's special operations community.

As a member of the specialized CST-2, White's job, highly confidential and done during an era when women were barred from combat arms professions, was to build and improve relationships with Afghan civilians, an especially pertinent role due to cultural limitations placed on Afghan women that prevented them from speaking with men who were not family members.

But going on the same missions as Green Berets, Army Rangers, and Navy SEALs meant the women of CST-2, while not under the umbrella of combat arms, were encountering the same type of intense risks as their male counterparts.

On Oct. 22, 2011, while conducting a patrol of a compound in Afghanistan's Kandahar Province, an Army Ranger accompanied by White and other members of CST-2 stepped on an improvised explosive device that triggered a daisy chain of IEDs.

Ashley White died in the blast, the first member of CST-2 to be killed in combat. The Ohio native, just 24 at the time, would be posthumously awarded the Bronze Star.

In 2015, best-selling author Gayle Tzemach Lemmon brought Ashley's story to life in "Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield."

Now, more than five years later, that story is in development for a big screen adaptation courtesy of a production team that includes Oscar-winner Reese Witherspoon, director Lesli Linka Glatter ("Homeland"), screenwriter Molly Smith Metzler ("Shameless," "Orange is the New Black"), and producer Bruna Papandrea ("Gone Girl").

Lemmon, whose upcoming book "The Daughters of Kobani: A Story of Rebellion, Courage, and Justice" documents an all-female Kurdish militia that battled ISIS in Syria, spoke with Military Times about the process of writing "Ashley's War," the role of CSTs, and shattering previously held stigmas of women in combat.

How did you first learn about CST-2 and what transpired on Ashley's deployment?

It actually started with hosting an event at the Council on Foreign Relations. I was full-time there at the time. There was a Marine veteran who was talking about these young women who were on night raids and operations in 2011.

And I knew Afghanistan, but I somehow didn't realize that there were women on special operations missions. I became absolutely focused on finding

Military Times OBSERVATION POST

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@MilitaryTimesOP

RUSSELL LEE KLIKA / ARMY

out more, so I started searching. There was very little out there — a press release, maybe five or six short clips, and an obituary that mentioned the Ranger Regiment. I wanted to know more about who these people were, what they were doing on these operations, and how we didn't know more about them as a country.

Eventually, I got in touch with Ashley's family, and I said, "You don't know me, but I'd really like to tell this story. I'd like to understand who your daughter was." Her mother said, "We were always waiting for somebody to call."

The minute I walked into their house and looked at the letters that had come in and saw the things that people have left at her gravesite, I knew this was something extraordinary. I just didn't know what that was. And that was really the journey over the next two years.

Obviously your book is a bulk source in this endeavor, but what does your input encompass in the film adaptation process?

It's been an amazing team to be a part of, and my role is simply to support and help, to answer any contextual questions. We've been in this as a team for five years now, so we all know each other pretty well (laughs).

This team has shown such great commitment in pushing this story forward and to bringing this to girls and boys — the next generation of young people — who will see, in a different way, what warriors look like.

Can you touch on what CST-2's mission entailed, as well as what the team members thought of the initiative?

Over the course of writing the book, "Ashley's War" ultimately became a story of friendship, love and valor, and that was a result of spending hours and hours with a group of young women who simply answered when their country asked.

As you know, in conservative and traditional societies, where men cannot speak with women who are not related by blood or marriage without giving offense, if you want to understand what was happening and wanted to access the entire population, you had to have women.

And so, this team was recruited from across the Army Guard and Reserve to go on some of the most important — and most dangerous — missions the military was undertaking. These women were recruited in March 2011, they trained in the summer, and by August, those who were on direct action missions were seeing the kind of combat experienced by less than 5 percent of the entire U.S. military.

There are many long-established, misguided stigmas when it comes to women in combat. What did your experience teach you about the nature of those perceptions? How did you see them evolve?

What it taught me was that those who were closest to these women had enormous respect for them. It was about serving with purpose and accomplishing the mission.

The men I met — Rangers who had done 13, 14, 15 deployments post-9/11 — made it clear that it was only about who can help you accomplish the mission and make it back home.

And I think that's what America is missing. America is so distanced from its wars and from the people who have fought them. These men and women in these roles don't have time for politics. They are trying to accomplish their mission, and any individual who got them home safely while getting the job done counted.

In the book there were certain special operators who were skeptical in the beginning, but then they take one of these CST members out with them and this woman helps find the thing or person they've been looking for because they can access quarters that would never have been within reach.

This was a group of women, who, when officially banned from ground combat, were seeing intense combat experienced only by a small fraction of the military — all while serving with valor and with enormous respect to the people with whom they went out every night.

What expectations did you have about Ashley's role going into writing the book versus your takeaway at its conclusion?

I had never spent years inside the special operations community or speaking with women who were a part of it. I felt like I was suddenly part of this world that was hidden in plain sight. And I felt a responsibility to show America who these extraordinary women were.

It wasn't enough to just show that they exist — they were funny, they had deep friendships, they were each other's babysitters, divorce therapists, career coaches, the person they would text at 2 a.m. Only they understood what they had done on the battlefield.

But America had no idea they existed and no idea what to do with them when they came home — the combat ban was still in place. So, I just felt compelled to tell a story that illuminated the world that these young women had built for themselves.

How did the process play out in terms of adapting the book for the big screen?

Right before the book came out, Reese Witherspoon and a number of others reached out and made it clear that they loved this story and wanted to do all they could to land it on the big screen.

In my mind I had always seen this story visually. As I was writing, I visualized how incredible these women's realizations must have been that there were others like them. All of a sudden each of them realized they weren't the only person who wanted to test themselves against the best of the best in service to their country.

It's been a journey to get this project done, so we're absolutely thrilled — over five years later — to be here, with America that much closer to seeing this story.

What does it mean to have some of these great women in the film industry steering this project?

It's a testament to the women in the story, it's a testament to the service members, and it's a testament to the desire to connect with our stories of valor and courage in new ways.

These women could choose to work on any project they want, so the fact that this is one they have consistently pushed for and championed means so much. And that's a result of what these young soldiers stood for.

Learn more about "Ashley's War" and pre-order Gayle's upcoming book "The Daughters of Kobani," scheduled for release on Feb. 16, 2021.



WHITE FAMILY

Coming to theaters

Reese Witherspoon will produce a feature film based on Lt. Ashley White Stumpf's story. Stumpf (pictured) was killed by an IED blast in Afghanistan in 2011.



COURTESY PHOTO

HOW THIS ONLYFANS MODEL GIVES BACK TO TROOPS

By Sarah Sicard
ssicard@militarytimes.com

If you look through Cami Strella's various internet profiles, you'll note that her posts range from sharing sultry images in tasteful lingerie to explaining interesting developments in neuroscience and debunking stereotypes about sex workers.

But where most service members will recognize her is from a viral 2020 Veterans Month TikTok post.

Working her way through a neuroscience graduate degree, Strella found herself inspired to invest some time in military appreciation after being personally impacted by the death of a close friend and Army officer who suffered from a traumatic brain injury and later took his own life.

By the the time the pandemic hit in early 2020, she was looking for a way that she could both pay her way through school and give back to the troops.

What she found was OnlyFans, the platform where she uploads and streams adult content for her subscribers — with some of them even seeking personalized videos and photos.

Observation Post caught up with Strella to learn more about her OnlyFans hustle, her plans to help others and how she's hoping to shatter stigmas surrounding sex workers.

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

I'm 27. I'm in graduate school for an allied health program, and I'll be specializing in neurological rehabilitation. I was born and raised in the Southeast U.S. and am the child of two immigrant parents, one of whom is a veteran. My family is aware of what I do, and they are actually very supportive.

What inspired you to join OnlyFans?

I've been in the adult industry for the last three years, including other online adult work. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, as you may know, OnlyFans became the platform of choice for all types of sex workers to use as venues shut down nationwide. I worked in a gentlemen's club previously, and I became increasingly worried about paying for my graduate school tuition as my program started in May 2020, so I joined the site as a creator.

Tell me about your connection to the military. Do you create specialized content for service members? If so, what made you decide to pursue that?

Many in the military and veteran community who follow me originally found me when a TikTok I posted went viral in November 2020. For Veteran's Day this past year, I posted two videos, both of which have received a lot of attention.

The first video, I offered a free trial to my OnlyFans site for all military and veterans. I anticipated perhaps 200 to 300 people would take up the offer but it ended up bringing in over 3,000 in one day.

The second video was a little more somber in that I shared my experience of losing someone (an Army officer) to suicide after surviving a traumatic brain injury after three deployments. This is what sparked my interest to want to go into the neuroscience field to begin with — to study TBIs and SCIs. He is still my "why."

If anything, I just want service members to know that I care, and that although it may be in an unusual way, I'm fighting to help them. I also donate 10 percent of my monthly earnings to a military charity and I typically have subscribers vote for which one they want me to donate to.

I wouldn't say I create anything specific in terms of content for service members, but a lot of my more public content is geared towards this community. I was raised in an area with a large concentration of service members of all branches, as well as federal government and contract workers, so I always felt embedded with the culture from a young age.

Speaking of service members, what are some the most common requests you get from them in terms of content?

In terms of OnlyFans content, I get a lot of requests to use someone's name if they're ordering a custom video. That's what's so great about OnlyFans — it brings such a personal and intimate experience to someone, and I truly love talking to my subscribers. I have a few that I exchange letters with and it brings such a human touch in the digital age. It's helped me, too, to stay and feel connected during the pandemic.

What are some of the greatest misconceptions you want people to understand about working through OnlyFans?

People seem to think that you just create an account and you instantly make money, and that's not how it works at all. If you truly want to be successful with OnlyFans, you need to be ready to invest a significant amount of time, money, and energy, just like any business.

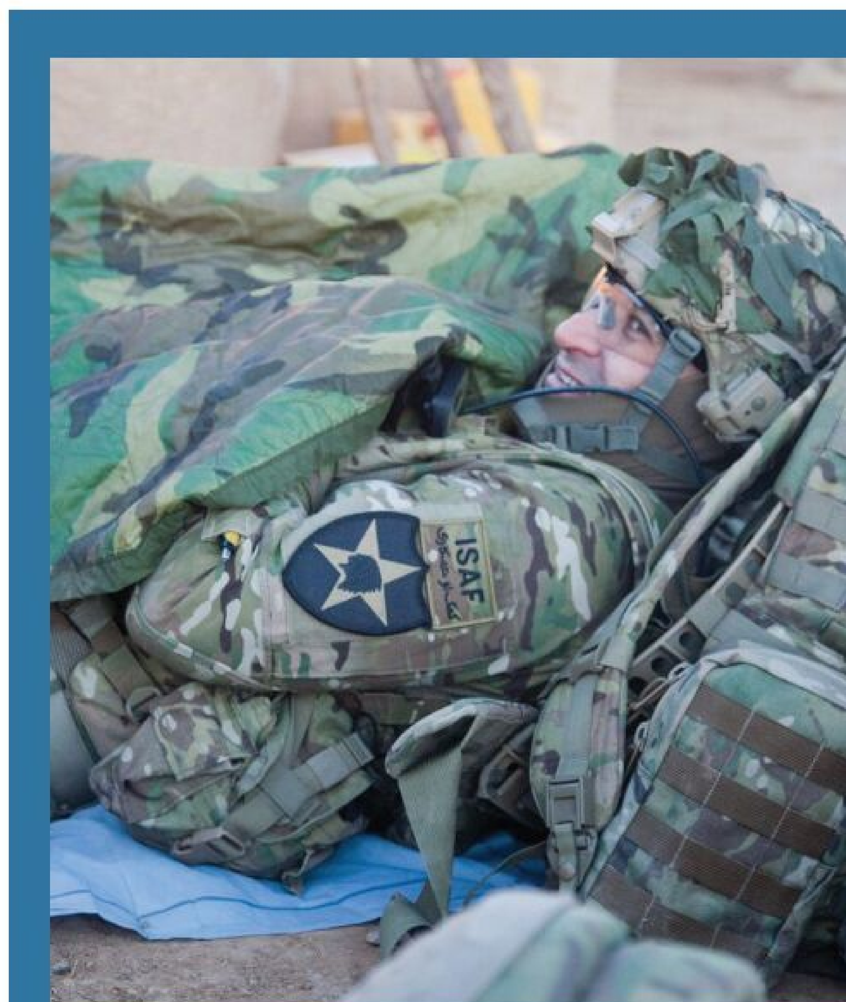
I started in February 2020 and made $11.18. Now, I rank in the top 0.88 percent of all creators worldwide. OnlyFans, unlike other social media platforms, does not have a built-in algorithm where others who don't know about you can find you. It's a direct-to-consumer type of model in which a creator has to do all of their own marketing outside of the platform.

Everyone has a different experience and background, but personally, my family is well aware of what I do and are very supportive — I know that is not the norm and I consider myself very fortunate.

There are many who do not agree with me or who dislike what I do. For those who may not know, sex workers and the military are not a new concept — just take a drive around most military bases and you'll likely see various strip clubs in the surrounding area.

OnlyFans, in my opinion, is just a version of this that has caught up with the times. The ease of accessibility is attractive to creators and subscribers for both long distance reasons and for staying safe during the pandemic.

"SEX WORKERS AND THE MILITARY ARE NOT A NEW CONCEPT — JUST TAKE A DRIVE AROUND MOST MILITARY BASES AND YOU'LL LIKELY SEE VARIOUS STRIP CLUBS IN THE SURROUNDING AREA."



LOVE LETTER TO MY DEAREST WOOBIE

By Sarah Sicard
ssicard@militarytimes.com

Beloved Woobie,

As I lay here in bed, my thoughts are with you.

I feel so guilty because my wife is mere inches away, but I must admit she does not, and will never, cannot ever, warm my soul the way you once did.

In truth, there is no place I'd rather be than in your tender embrace. When we are not asleep together, I lie awake wondering if you think of me as often as I think of you. Once my eyes close, I often find myself dreaming about our time together — tormented by the thought that you are no longer a fixture in my bed.

I sleep best when I sleep in your arms. You were my singular comfort as war raged all around me. There was no greater love than the one you showed me when I was at my lowest point, in need of shelter from the worst trials humanity had to offer. We went to hell and back together, and no words can ever express the depth of my gratitude for having had you by my side.

Each day, I reminisce fondly on the warmth of your touch. You are the shelter I seek in the storm and the fire that warms my heart in the cold winter months. I love you.

Eternally yours,
A humble soldier



Overall a solid sleeping position, this soldier is pressed up against a pile of gear for support. What's perplexing, though, is the choice to sit on his right leg. We'd wager that when he wakes up, his leg will be fast asleep, and when he tries to stand, his knee is going radiate pain like static through your TV when the cable cuts out. Big yikes. (Spc. Tracy McKithern/Army)

A DEFINITIVE RANKING OF TROOPS' EXTREME NAPPING POSITIONS

By Sarah Sicard
ssicard@militarytimes.com

Sleep can be hard to come by in the service. One of the very first things you learn when you enlist is that you should take any and every napping opportunity possible, despite the location. As thousands of National Guard members filter through the halls of the U.S. Capitol, civilians are getting firsthand looks at just how easily soldiers can turn a concrete floor into a comfortable nest. If dozing off in uncomfortable places and positions were an Olympic sport, service members take home gold every time. That's why we decided to pull together a definitive ranking of some the best, worst, and downright ridiculous sleeping positions in recent military history, on scale from 1 to 10, in terms of insanity.



These paratroopers' nap line is almost as uniform as it would be if they were conscious and standing in formation. Note the classic near-fetal position they've all adopted on the floor and smart utilization of the shadow under the bench to block out the light. That's some real Army ingenuity. (Sgt. 1st Class Seth Laughter/Army)



Soaking wet is no way to nap. We can't imagine that this guy's covering is doing much except preventing him from inhaling rainwater as he tries to get in a few zzzs. Still, props for trying. At least in the rain, no one can see you cry yourself to sleep. (Spc. Micah Clare/Army)

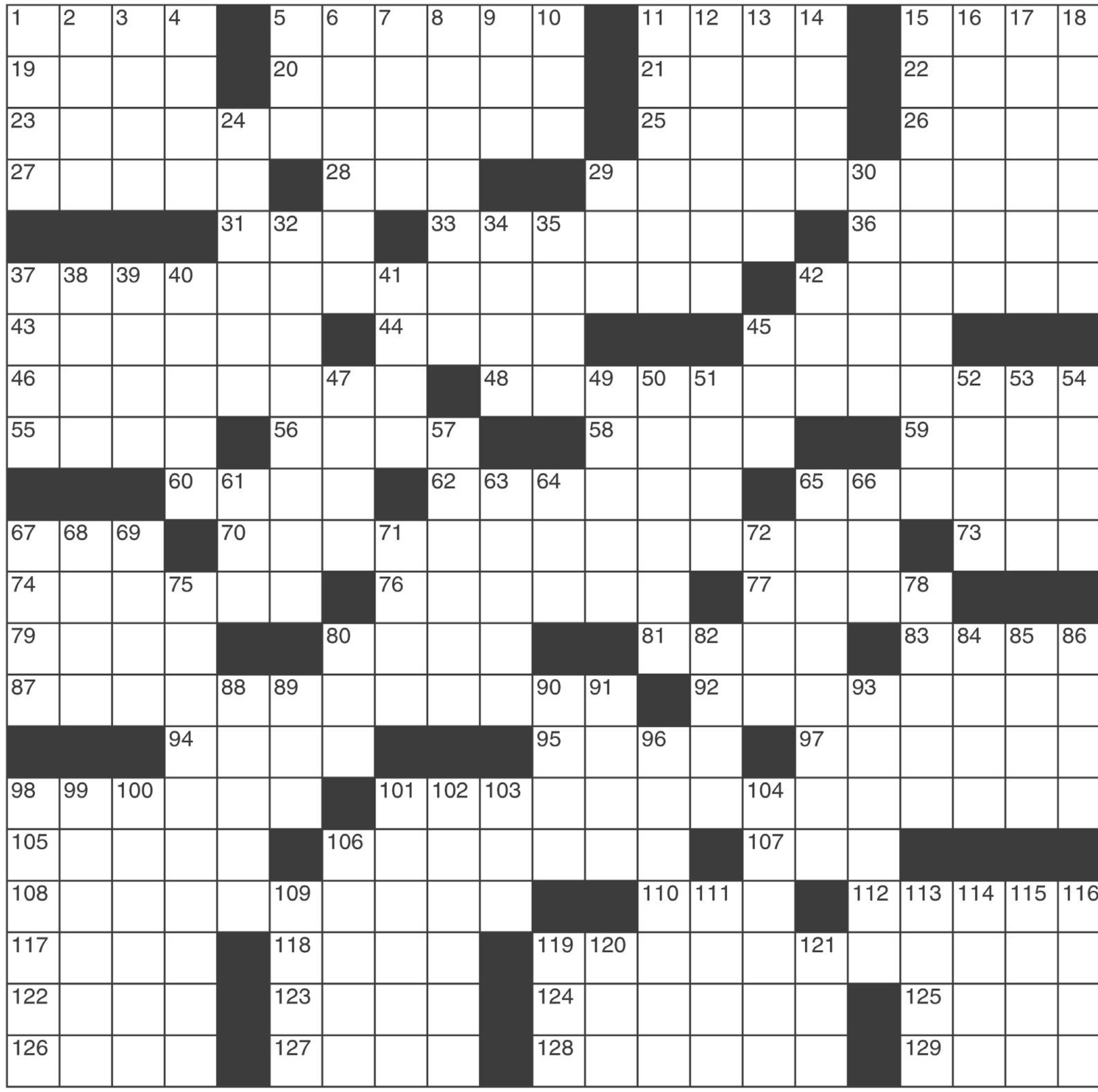
SOUND OFF!

Do you have an epic nap photo from deployment or field ops? Share on Twitter and tag us **@MilitaryTimesOP**

TOP LEFT: SPC. KRISTINA TRULUCK/ARMY

CROSSWORD

By Frank A. Longo
King Features Syndicate



#2,025 Average time of solution: 68 minutes

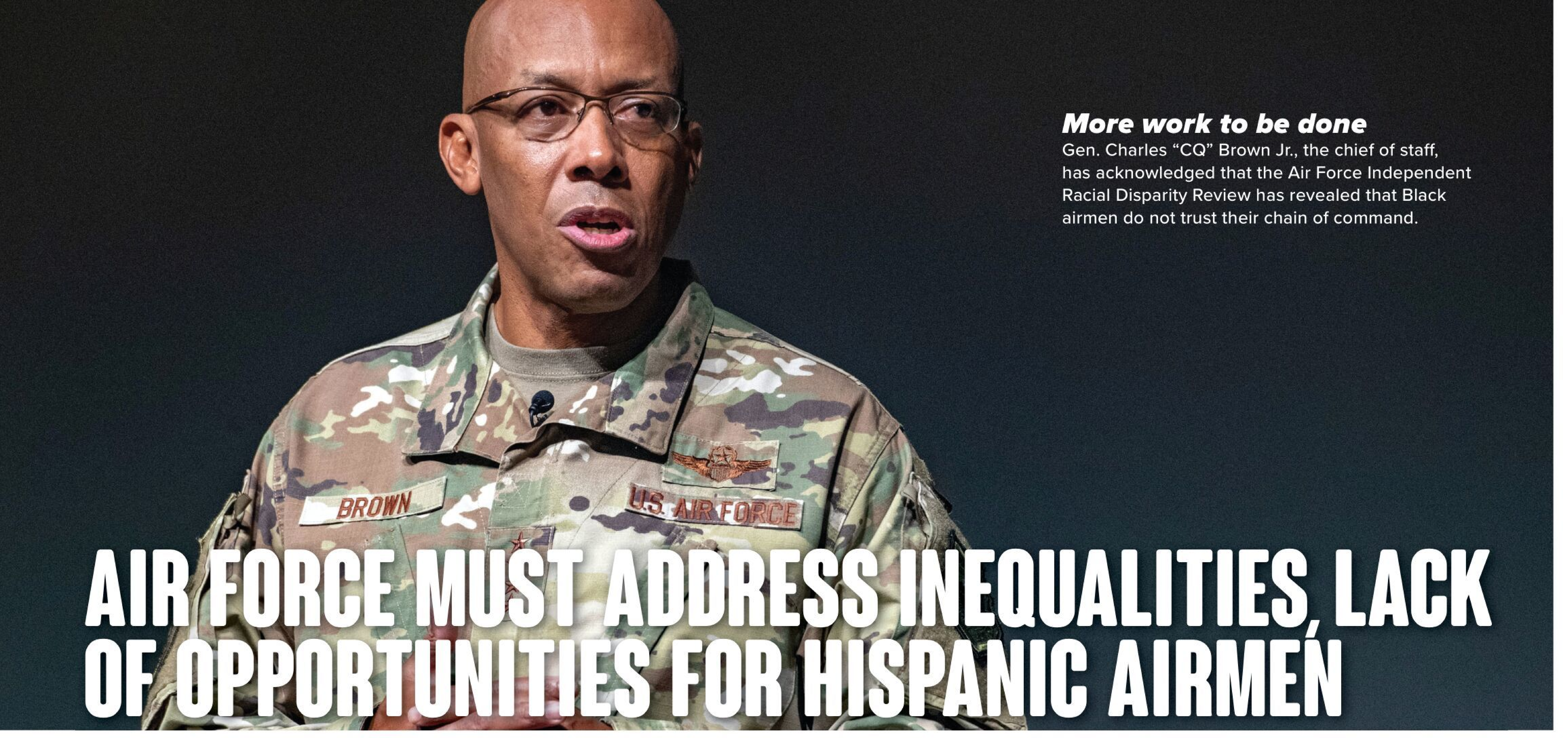
HARD-TO-SEE FEE

ACROSS

1 Suddenly blazing star
5 Put stress on
11 Volcano in Sicily
15 Meadow songbird
19 Supreme Norse deity
20 Net-tending player
21 Donahue of TV
22 Genesis garden
23 Very ornate designs of the 1700s
25 Be mindful of
26 Bill with Lincoln
27 Sports site
28 Apr. and Dec.
29 Longtime metal alloy manufacturer
31 M.Sgt., e.g.
33 Friz Freleng's real first name
36 Mean-spirited sort
37 Fill-up sites with star logos
42 Crows
43 Oscar winner Brody
44 Like a straight line, in brief
45 Work to get
46 Mimicking an angry dog
48 1993 event at Mount Carmel Center
55 Comic actor Danny
56 Spill the info, with "up"
58 Region
59 Raines of old Hollywood
60 Active person
62 Spring forth
65 Thingamajig
67 "Please help!"
70 Venue of the 2002 Humanitarian Bowl
73 Log chopper
74 Brief summary
76 Sprung forth
77 Trail
79 Prefix with dynamic
80 Henna applier
81 Read hastily
83 Gibbons, e.g.
87 Something Plus White toothpaste claims to remove
92 Water, humorously
94 Sports side
95 Potting stuff
97 TV journalist Chung
98 Mimicked Daffy Duck
101 A cut from the short loin
105 Playwright Fugard
106 Vocalists
107 Simile middle
108 University in northern California
110 McKellen of "X-Men"
112 Mosul native
117 Aquarium
118 One of 18 on a golf course
119 They're in eight answers in this puzzle
122 Slushy drink
123 Superior to
124 Works the rudder
125 Dimple site
126 Play roster
127 Joins in matrimony
128 Cherished "Mother"
129 Held on to

DOWN

1 With 11-Down, "Sleepless in Seattle" director
2 Aroma
3 Destructive habit
4 After a while
5 In days past
6 Carl Sagan book
7 Roman censor
8 Blissful
9 Nothing at all
10 One of 18 on a golf course
11 See 1-Down
12 One's wifey
13 Nephew's sister
14 Gucci of fashion
15 Unlike righties
16 Farewells
17 Go back to the way it was
18 Belfry sounds
24 Call off
29 Foofaraw
30 Jeer at
32 Christmas trees, usually
34 Single-pot meal
35 Verdi heroine
37 Job to do
38 Pulitzer winner Ferber
39 Diagnostic pic
40 Ran on TV
41 Clothes, colloquially
42 Ewe's call
45 LGA guess
47 Emperor before Galba
49 A la — (menu words)
50 Hammond instruments
51 Potential plant
52 "Three Sisters" sister
53 Tighten up a muscle
54 Destiny
57 Under wraps
61 Kyoto sash
63 Actress Kelly or Shearer
64 Suffix with prophet
65 Andean llamas
66 Quantity: Abbr.
67 Little quarrel
68 Classic cookie
69 Kosovo native
71 "No" votes
72 Apple device
75 Opening in a parka, say
78 Lacks
80 DeLuise of "Hot Stuff"
82 Large city in Colombia
84 Window unit
85 Kazan of film
86 Search for
88 Green with Grammys
89 Ill-bred man
90 "Oh, woe —!"
91 Jordanian queen dowager
93 Tile artwork
96 Like some trading
98 Milk-related
99 Cornell University city
100 Gives off light
101 Used a rotary telephone
102 Puts in
103 Big T-shirt size: Abbr.
104 Some chair craftspeople
106 Hot pot spot
109 Movie or play
111 "Zip- — -Doo-Dah"
113 Pebble, e.g.
114 Tennis' Arthur
115 Ear swab
116 "— that special!"
119 1940s pres.
120 Suffix with Israel
121 Hush-hush govt. gp.



More work to be done
Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown Jr., the chief of staff, has acknowledged that the Air Force Independent Racial Disparity Review has revealed that Black airmen do not trust their chain of command.

TREY WARD/AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE MUST ADDRESS INEQUALITIES, LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR HISPANIC AIRMEN

By Brig. Gen. (ret.) Ricardo Aponte and Brig. Gen. (ret.) Carlos E. Martinez

We recently reviewed the Air Force's Independent Racial Disparity Review, published in December, which focused on disparities affecting Black airmen and provided recommendations to develop action plans addressing them.

The IRDR study presented a significant amount of data that showed racial disparities for Black service members. In terms of military justice, there are inequities in police apprehensions, criminal investigations, administrative separations and more. In terms of equal opportunity, there were troubling statitics regarding placement into occupational career fields, promotion rates, professional military educational development and leadership opportunities.

Because the focus of the report was on issues affecting Blacks, it did not include complete data on Hispanics.

Yet, the limited Hispanic data the review did include clearly shows disparities for Hispanics as great or even greater than those affecting Blacks. Consequently, we believe that while the IRDR is a good first step towards addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the Air Force, it is incomplete and its recommendations are premature.

Based on our collective and personal experience as former senior leaders and minority officers, we suggest the Air Force immediately commission another IRDR-type review focusing on the largest ethnic minority in the U.S. Air Force, Hispanic airmen.

This first report provides data on Hispanics for only a few categories of information such as promotion rates and selections for command positions.

While the IRDR correctly identifies significant equal opportunity issues facing Black airmen with respect to these two categories of data, the data that is presented clearly shows similar disparities facing Hispanics, but these are not discussed.

For example, IRDR data clearly show underrepresentation of Hispanics in command level positions, in particular, the low selection rate of Hispanic officers to squadron commander and wing commander slots. As acknowledged in the report, these types of assignments are necessary for future advancement in rank. As shown by the data in the report, Hispanic service members are underrepresented in promotions to major through colonel, severely underrepresented in promotions to brigadier general and major general and have zero promotions to the ranks of lieutenant general and general.

While these differences are clearly evident in the report, its narrow focus on issues affecting Black airmen has led to the development of recommendations that may not necessarily address longstanding disparities for Hispanics and other minorities.

Also, while the IRDR suggests that the root causes of racial and ethnic disparities should be investigated, it goes on to provide specific corrective recommendations without the benefit of conducting such an analysis.

Consequently, we believe that the IRDR should only be considered a "first step" towards promoting greater diversity and inclusion in the Air Force, but more research needs to be done before any actionable recommendations be developed.

Specifically, we believe that the Air Force should immediately commission another IRDR-type review with several structural modifications:

◆ The comprehensive review should be focused on Hispanic service members, as they represent one of the three largest populations in the Air Force.

◆ The review should include surveys and interviews of Hispanic members, as was done for Black members.

◆ The review should capitalize on the existing data to develop actionable recommendations that can be accomplished in the near term.

◆ To support longer-term solutions, the review should seek to identify root causes of lack of diversity, for which additional longitudinal data analyses may be needed.

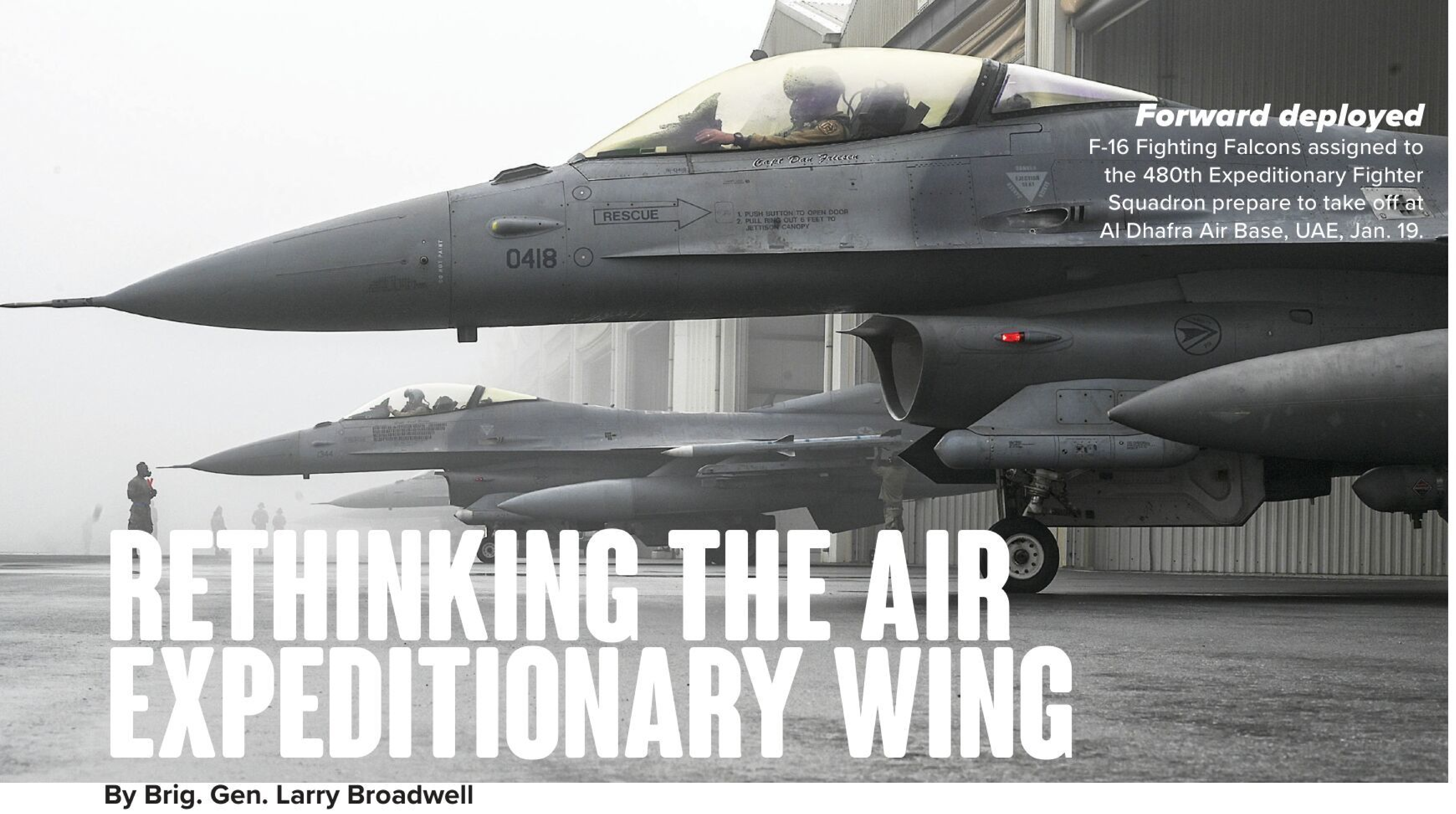
◆ The review should truly be independent, meaning the chairperson and key leaders of the review should be sourced from outside the Air Force.

Previous published data found the eligible officer population for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino cohorts to be 7 percent and 9 percent, respectively, while the U.S. Hispanic population is 18 percent and growing steadily. Many census forecasts project that the U.S. Hispanic/Latino population will increase from 18 percent to approximately 25 percent over the next 20 to 30 years, so unless steps are taken to identify and correct the disparities in Hispanic representation already identified in the IRDR, the underrepresentation of Hispanics is only going to get worse.

After this review is complete, the Air Force should develop means to ensure accountability for accomplishing the corrective actions recommended by the report. For example, it should form a permanent council or commission charged with monitoring and enforcing the execution of the targeted strategies over time.

The Air Force does not and perhaps should not do this alone. It can draw upon the expertise resident in organizations such as the Hispanic Veterans Leadership Alliance, an organization committed to advancing the inclusion of Hispanics throughout the Department of Defense, in this endeavor. The HVLA's advocacy with congressional leaders and national Hispanic community leaders will reinforce the Air Force's desire for transparency and accountability.

Retired Air Force Brig. Gens. Ricardo Aponte and Carlos E. Martinez are members of the Hispanic Veterans Leadership Alliance (hvlavets.org) and the American College of National Security Leaders.



Forward deployed
F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the 480th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron prepare to take off at Al Dhafra Air Base, UAE, Jan. 19.

STAFF SGT. MIRANDA LOERA/AIR FORCE

RETHINKING THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING

By Brig. Gen. Larry Broadwell

Two months ago, the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing welcomed the 480th Fighter Squadron from Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, to Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, arguably the most strategically located and diverse AEW in the Middle East.

Immediately upon arrival, the "Warhawks" were re-designated as the 480th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron and began executing kinetic operations, regional competition, partner integration and unit readiness training. The Warhawks were dozens of sorties into their deployment before even donning their new deployment patches; a testament to the agile, adaptable nature of our combat squadrons. In just over 60 days, they executed approximately 500 combat and training sorties, and integrated with multiple joint and regional partners while experiencing three different air expeditionary wings' locations.

The Warhawks' deployment demonstrated the power of dynamic force employment (DFE), a deployment characteristically agile, adaptable, short-term and in response to an emergent theater requirement. The Warhawks' list of theater contributions and unit readiness gains is impressive, even more so when considering they were given weeks rather than months to complete it. The squadron's deployment to Al Dhafra exceeded everyone's expectations and, more importantly, demonstrated the merits of DFE.

First and foremost, the Warhawks' DFE generated long-lasting effects with a brief, episodic and operationally unpredictable presence. Whether for combat, competition, partner integration, or all three, the Warhawks' results demonstrated that a well-timed, intense deployment can produce results similar to an enduring one. There is no doubt that virtual presence equals absolute absence. Unfortunately, there is also no doubt that our Air Force can't be everywhere at once. When tested, however, we consistently prove we'll be where we're needed, when we're needed.

Second, DFE has the potential to turn our standard training model on its head. Typically, units reach their "readiness peak" just prior to deploying, sharpening their skills for combat in a deployed location. With more than 80 percent of the pilots tackling their first deployment experience, the squadron focused on completing much needed upgrades in combat skills. With time to spare, the unit accomplished all of its training objectives, and ultimately increased its combat capability by nearly 50 percent, measured from qualifications completed. The Warhawks came to us sharpened for combat, but the truth is that they'll return home more ready than when they arrived.

Finally, DFE is capable of improving our efficacy in managing Air Force forces around the globe. Remember, the Warhawks, a EUCOM assigned unit, "DFE'ed" to CENTCOM to advance U.S. regional interests while improving squadron readiness. From their CENTCOM location, they then participated in contingency operations in support of AFRICOM.

EUCOM, to CENTCOM, employed in AFRICOM, and back to EUCOM; inter-combatant command use of forces underpins our ability to manage a global force in high demand.

So what does DFE mean for an air expeditionary wing? Let's start with what "expeditionary" means: to be expeditious; to be on an expedition. As an AEW commander, I face the reality that this wing has been at Al Dhafra Air Base for more than two decades. As DFE becomes the preferred engagement option, shouldn't it also inspire an evolution in our existing AEW deployment model? AEWs of the future, which may resemble AEWs of the past, need to become more agile, adaptable, and perhaps be deployed episodically. Remember the importance of operational unpredictability? Our adversaries do.

The Air Force chief of staff continues to challenge airmen to "accelerate change or lose." The chief's mandate certainly applies to how we generate combat airpower and deploy the force. Consequently, rethinking how we deploy AEWs should also be on the table. I'm confident there's a better model for AEWs in the minds of our young airmen, one that balances readiness with the increasing demands of great power competition. Making that model a reality will help secure our future.

Brig. Gen. Larry Broadwell is the commander of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Dhafra Air Base, UAE. He is a command pilot with hours in the C-130E, F-15C, F-22, and RQ-4. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own and do not represent U.S. government or Department of Defense positions.

AirForceTimes

EDITORIAL
Editor Kent Miller
kmiller@militarytimes.com

Air Force Reporter Stephen Losey
slosey@militarytimes.com

Military Times Executive Editor
Andrew Tilghman
atilghman@militarytimes.com
Managing Editor Howard Altman
haltman@militarytimes.com
Deputy Editor and Capitol Hill Bureau Chief
Leo Shane III
lshane@militarytimes.com
Pentagon Bureau Chief Meghann Myers
mmyers@militarytimes.com
News Editor Steve Weigand
sweigand@militarytimes.com
Associate Editor, Military Culture J.D. Simkins
jsimkins@militarytimes.com
Army Reporter Kyle Rempfer
krempfer@militarytimes.com
Marine Corps Reporter Philip Athey
pathey@marinecorpstimes.com
Ground Combat Reporter Todd South
tsouth@militarytimes.com
Navy Reporter Geoff Ziezulewicz
geoffz@militarytimes.com
Editor, Military Communities Karen Jowers
kjowers@militarytimes.com
Military Health Care Reporter Patricia Kime
pkime@militarytimes.com
Early Bird Brief Editor Diana Stancy Correll
dcorrell@militarytimes.com

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mgreenberg@militarytimes.com
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After the riot
Trump supporters left a discarded flag on the floor of the Capitol building on Jan. 6.

OLIVIER DOULIERY/GETTY IMAGES

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

FROM THE EDITORS

IT'S TIME TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT EXTREMISM IN THE RANKS

The issue of extremism in the military is not a new concern. With 1.3 million service members on active duty, the military is — thankfully — a good and fair reflection of the country it serves. So it would be hard to find any societal problem that does not exist somewhere inside the military community.

Yet these concerns are far more urgent now than at any time in recent memory after the Jan. 6 attack on Capitol Hill, when a mob sought to disrupt the functioning of legitimate government activities and to use violence to prevent elected officials from discharging their duties under the Constitution.

To be sure, the vast majority of people who stormed inside the Capitol were cosplay commandos who never have been anywhere near a real military operation, and have no training or discipline. Many just seemed to derive some strange satisfaction from parading around in old, mismatched military surplus gear.

Nevertheless, there are dozens of documented examples of service members and recent veterans who were in the crowd that day. And, more broadly, the crowd's eagerness to associate itself with military culture in general creates a perception problem for the professional warfighters who run the Pentagon.

A belief — real or perceived — that the military community or any service branch in particular harbors sympathies for extremists is a major problem for the all-volunteer force. Those are not views shared by the vast majority of Americans. If the Pentagon wants to continue to recruit the best and brightest, military leaders need to dispel any notion of implicit support for those ideas in general and those groups in particular.

In the past, military commanders periodically have identified individuals who were involved with extremists' groups that advocated for white supremacy or violence against the government. Those individuals were disciplined, sometimes Congress would hold a hearing, a task force might be convened to makes recommendations. In each case, the matter was put to rest, and there was little if any real institutional change.

A key question is: How big of a problem is it, really? How many people in today's active and reserve components have ties or loyalties to extremist groups?

The answer is we don't know. And that should change. Military leaders should develop a reliable system for tracking data on allegations and disciplinary actions related to extremism. The data should be shared with the FBI.

The Pentagon has models for addressing systemic or cultural problems. They've demonstrated a real commitment and some effectiveness on issues like sexual assault or suicide prevention or hazing.

Commanders should actively encourage service members to report signs of extremist activity. There should be education and training for all ranks that confront this issue head on.

In the age of social media, it's more important than ever that commanders use swift punishment to send a message that you can't hide in plain sight or openly affiliate with these groups and expect to advance the military.

The military's top officer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, has offered real leadership during this difficult time. The new Defense Secretary, Lloyd Austin III, has promised to address the issue of extremism in the ranks. His own personal experience — as an African American raised in the Deep South who graduated from West Point in the 1970s and spent 41 years in the Army — may make him uniquely suited for this moment. And his recent order directing commanding officers and supervisors at all levels to conduct a "stand-down" to discuss extremism in the ranks is a step in the right direction.

This is not about politics. It's about the health of the All-Volunteer Force and U.S. national security.

PARTING SHOT



THE 1 PERCENT

Nova, a full white-phase Gyrfalcon and the latest member of the United States Air Force Academy's falconry team, perches on a handler's arm in Colorado Springs, Colo., Dec. 3. Such birds are extremely rare in the wild. Just 3 percent of all falcons are gyrfalcons, and only 1 percent of those are white. Air Force cadets who work with the birds are federally licensed. They spend two months in training and are tested before they can handle them.
Photo by Joshua Armstrong/Air Force

Submit your own ***Parting Shot: partingshot***@airforcetimes.com


"Raw…funny…
completely human
as the soldiers
themselves."
—General Stanley A. McChrystal,
US Army (Ret.)
"GOD BLESS
THEM,
ONE AND
ALL."
—Brigadier General Peter Dawkins,
US Army (Ret.)
"These are the stories America needs to hear about the remarkable young men and women who serve."
—Admiral William H. McRaven, US Navy (Ret.)
WALK IN MY
COMBAT BOOTS
James Patterson
and
Matt Eversmann
First Sergeant, USA, Ret.
with Chris Mooney
"Will reaffirm your
faith in all that is
good and honorable
about this country."
—Admiral William H. McRaven,
US Navy (Ret.)
"This book will
take your breath away,
break your heart,
and leave you in awe."
—President Bill Clinton
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